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Practical Observations
UPON THE
MIRACLES
OF OUR
Blessed Saviour.

BY
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*Jesus of Nazareth, a Man Approved of God by
Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God
did by him. Acts 2. 22.*

*Who can express the Noble Acts of the Lord, or
shew forth all his Praise ! Psalm 106. 2.*

L O N D O N,

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Practical Observations

UPON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

Religion & Morals



By J. H. ...
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T O

The Right Reverend Father in GOD,

JAMES

Lord Bishop of *Lincoln*.

My Lord,

I had no sooner resolv'd
upon making these Pa-
pers Publick, than I
perswaded my self of a Fa-
vourable Reception, should
I beg leave to Present them
to *Your Lordship*: who are

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al.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

always ready to encourage Industry in Your Clergy, and countenance what is Honestly Design'd; and whose known Candour, and obliging Treatment of us, give us great Reason to look upon You, not only with Awful Veneration, as our *Bishop*, but with Affection as our Friend.

We cannot but be Sensible what great need there is of keeping up a Lively Sense of Religion in our People; which decays and cools so fast, that 'tis well if our repeated Applications can preserve it in some tolera-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

tolerable degree of warmth, and prevent its being quite destroyed by Prophaneness and Infidelity. And therefore, 'tis questionless our Duty, upon all accounts, to contribute what we can to this great Good Work, and every little will help.

What good the following Observations may do, I cannot say, That depending, next to the Blessing of God, upon the Pious Disposition of those that shall please to Peruse them; but my *Intention* being right, and the *Subject* in it self so truly Noble, and migh-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

tily Affecting, I may hope they will not be altogether Unsuccessful: especially if furthered by Your Lordship's *Prayers* and *Episcopal Benediction*. Which, as they were always of great Value in the Purest Times of the Church, so are now justly esteemed, and desir'd with all due Respect, by

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

most Humble and

Obedient Servant,

Francis Bragge.

THE PREFACE.

THAT our Saviour's Wondrous Works were truly Miracles, *that is, not only out of the usual course of Nature, but far above the Powers of it, and such as no Created Being could effect, unless assisted by the Great Power of God; I shall take for granted: it having been often undeniably prov'd by many excellent Persons, particularly by the Late Learned Bishop Stillingfleet in his Origines Sacræ, Book II. Chap. X. and in the latter part of the last Discourse, in the IV. Vol. of his Sermons lately Published; to whose Arguments I think nothing can be added.*

As for the Nature of them, they were all full of Mercy and Goodness: and their Great End was to convince the Jews and all the World, That he was the promised Messias sent by God to be the Redeemer of Sinful Mankind; and to confirm the Divinity of the Doctrine he Taught, and incline Men to

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embrace it; and to overthrow the Kingdom of the Devil,

And accordingly he always made a wise choice, of such Times and Places to work them in, and upon such Persons, in such a Manner, and with such Circumstances; as were most apt to inform the World, both who he was, and what he came for.

And indeed, when one of so Mean Birth and Condition in all outward appearance, as Jesus was, and withall so Young, shall take upon him to teach a New Religion, so widely different from that both of Jews and Gentiles; to the Jews a Stumbling-Block, in that it took away the Ceremonial Part of the Law of Moses, which they were most of all fond of, and to the Greeks Foolishness upon account of its Spiritual Heavenly Doctrines, so contrary to their former Notions and Usages, and the Corrupt Inclinations of Flesh and Blood: 'Tis but necessary that he should give Sufficient Proof of his Authority so to do, and that he is no Vain and Arrogant Pretender.

Now nothing more convincing than the exercise of such a Power as all Men must own to be Divine. As Nicodemus said

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to Jesus, Rabbi, we know that thou art John 3. 2.
a Teacher come from God, for no Man
can do these Miracles that thou doest ex-
cept God be with him. *And when this
Miraculous Power is made use of in confer-
ing many and great Benefits and Blessings
upon Mankind, " Removing their Calami-
ties, Relieving their Necessities, Healing
their Diseases, Restoring their Dead
Friends to Life again, &c. 'Tis still more
engaging, and must needs, in all reason, ve-
ry much endear the Person and the Doctrine
of so extraordinary a Benefactor, who not
only Speaks so as never Man Spake, but does
such Beneficial Miracles too, as no Man ever
did.*

And therefore, to these Supernatural John 5.
Works of his does our Lord Appeal, as the 36.
Letters Credential of his Divine Mission;
The Works which my Father hath given
me to Finish, says he, The same Works
that I do bear Witness of me, that the
Father hath sent me. If I do not the John 10.
Works of my Father believe me not; 37.
but if I do, though ye believe not me,
believe the Works, that ye may know
and believe that the Father is in me and
I in him. And these signs are written, John 20.
says St. John, that ye might believe that ult.
Jesus

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Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name.

And accordingly we read, that by his first Miracle Jesus manifested forth his Glory, and his Disciples believed on him; Joh. 2. 11. and verse 24. Many believed on his Name when they saw the Miracles that he did. And when many continued obstinate in their Infidelity, 'tis mentioned as a thing very strange and unaccountable, that though he had done so many Miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.

John 12.
37.

For our Saviour's Miracles were not wrought Sparingly and Seldom, as the Counterfeit Wonders of Impostors use to be, (who being sensible of the narrow Limits of their Power, and the poorness of their Stock of Juggles, always take care to Husband them out to the best advantage, for fear they should become Bankrupt, and no longer able to deceive the World:) But he shewed his Divine Power very often, upon all just occasions, and in great variety of instances, and some of them so amazing, that they stop'd the Mouths of his greatest Enemies, or else forced from them such acknowledgements as they were very unwilling to make. He

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He was so well assured of the fullness of his unbounded Power which could never be exhausted, nor any thing too great for it to effect; that without any other preparation or fore-thought than Secret Prayer to God; he immediately undertook the most difficult performances with admirable Success: and chose to do his Miracles in such a manner as made them still the more Miraculous. "Curing the most Chronical and Desperate Diseases, supplying the defects of Nature, restoring life to the Dead, with his Word only, or his Touch; and sometimes at a Distance, Speaking Wondrous Cures, and sometimes doing them by the bare Touch of his Garment. Or if at any time any thing was done by him, or applied, which looked like outward means; it was, what could not be suppos'd to have any efficiency to cause what followed: "as when he Cured Dumbness by touching the Tongue with Spittle, "Blindness by covering the Eyes with Clay, "and Deafness by putting his Fingers into the Persons Ears, and the like, which in those Cases could not in a Natural way signify any thing at all.

And the effects of all his Miracles were Real, Substantial, and Lasting; all his Cures were Perfect, and restored a Durable Life

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Life and Health and Soundness to the happy Patients.

Nothing was Airy and Phantastick like the Delusions of Evil Spirits and those that are assisted by them; but, as all was done openly and before great numbers of Spectators, many of which were very nice and prying, in hopes to discover some Trick or Cheat in what he did, so every thing answer'd, and even exceeded, Mens utmost expectations; and left no room to question the reality of any of his Mighty Works.

Matth. 12.
25.

The utmost that could be said by the most Malicious, was that he cast out Devils by the help of the Prince of the Devils; but Jesus soon made them sensible of the Ridiculousness of that Objection.

Nor were his Miracles designed only as proofs of his Divine Mission, and Confirmations of his Doctrine, and motives to Faith in him as the Messias; but I observ'd in my perusal of them, that they were so contrived as to be very Instructive too in many excellent Truths, relating to Religious Practice, to those that would consider them with due Seriousness and Attention.

And

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And this it was, that first put me upon employing my Thoughts upon them in a Practical Way, and drawing such Observations from them as might conduce to the Interests of Piety and Holy Life: and I soon found it an Employment equally Beneficial and Delightful; and hope, the Pious Reader of what follows will do so too.

The most, and greatest, of those Miracles that are Recorded in the Gospel, he will find considered in the order wherein I suppose they were wrought, and which include what is of chiefest remark in those that are past by; and it has been my great Care all along, not to Force or Strain any thing, nor make any Observations but what are Natural and Easy, and seem to offer themselves.

And if the Pains I have taken, shall prove a help to any ones Reading this Glorious Part of our Lords Admirable Life, with Understanding and Affection, and make him any thing better than he was before; I shall think them well bestow'd, and they have fully answer'd my End.

All therefore that I further desire of the Reader is this, That he would peruse this little

The Preface.

Pfal. 19.
ult.

little Book, not like a Critick, but a Christian; and join with me in Supplicating God for his Blessing, upon what is here offered to the Publick for his Service: That the Words of my Mouth and the Meditations of my Heart, may be acceptable in his Sight, who is our Strength and our Redeemer.

The

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ERRATA.

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11. Ten Lepers Cleansed.

12. One made to See, who was Born Blind.

13. Lazarus raised from the Dead, after
four days buried.

Practical Observations

UPON OUR

Saviour's Miracles.

The First Miracle,

Water turned into Wine.

John II. 1.

There was a Marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus was called and his Disciples to the Marriage. And when they wanted Wine, the Mother of Jesus saith unto him, they have no Wine, &c.

WHOSE Marriage, or Nuptial Entertainment this was, it is not material to enquire, tho' some think it was St. John's the Evangelist, who was our Saviour's Cousin-German; for they suppose, that ei-

A. and H. first either

ther the Bride or Bridegroom must be some near Relation of our Lord's, since the Blessed Virgin is said to be there, before Jesus and his Disciples were invited; none of whom, much less all, can be imagin'd to go so far as from *Nazareth* to *Cana* of *Galilee* to the Wedding of a Stranger. But that St. *John* was the Man, is meer Conjecture, and so let it pass; only with this Remark, that the story seems to be fram'd with an Ill Design: For, lest our Saviour's Presence, and his doing his first Miracle at a Wedding, should confer too much Honour upon Matrimony; we are told, that before the Consummation of the Marriage, Jesus call'd away St. *John* to be one of his constant Attendants; and so rescu'd his Favourite Disciple from that Polluted state of Life, in comparison with that more Holy and perfect one into which he took him. Such pitiful shifts are some Men put to, to support an unreasonable and unchristian Doctrine.

But after all their Legends, the Company of Jesus there, and his Blessed Mother, and his Disciples, does indeed give a great Reputation to Marriage; when it is so carried on, as that Persons of the greatest sanctity may be Present even at the Festival Entertainments of it, without the least offence. Had

Had there been any thing Ill in it, any Immodesty, or so much as Indecency, our Lord would never have countenanced it with his Holy Presence; but since he was pleased not only to be a Guest at this Bridal Feast, but to stay till the Wine began to fail; 'tis plain that as Marriage in it self is Honourable, and not at all unworthy of the Approbation and Favour even of the Son of God; so those Festivities which usually attend it, may have a great deal of cheerfulness and plenty in them, and freer use than ordinary of the good Creatures of God, and yet be very Innocent: For our Lord we may be sure, would never have supplied them by his Divine Power with new recruits of Wine, had he seen the least Tendency to Debauchery and Riot.

So that the Immodesty, and too often Beastly Obscenity, and all sorts of Extravagance, that now so generally defile our Marriage solemnities, and make them just Matter of offence to Pious Persons, proceeds from the Foulness of our Hearts; and would we but keep them clean, a Wedding Entertainment would be as Innocent as any other, and have nothing in it that should need to fear the Observance of the strictest Eye.

And indeed, tho' nothing is more seasonable and becoming than expressions of Satisfaction and Joy, when the Friend we love best is made our Propriety, and that till Death shall part us; when Parents have disposed of their Children Prudently and Religiously, and hope to have their Name and Family Perpetuated, and their Estates enjoy'd by their own Posterity; and the whole Relation and Neighbourhood too, in some respect or other like to share in the Happiness of an agreeable Match: Tho' Blessings so great as these, require not only a Thankful but a Joyful Reception; yet the Nature of them is such as should temper that Joy with serious Reflections, and season it with Devout and Pious Thoughts.

For the Blessing is from God, and therefore, the Praise should be his; and very ungrateful are they, who are so full of their own Satisfactions, as to forget their great Benefactor. And there are so many particular Obligations too, that attend this new State of Life, upon the due discharge of which depends the Parties Future Happiness: That they must be very Thoughtless indeed, who quite forget all this, and those that at all consider

sider it, will find so great and durable a Change in their Condition, to be a thing not designed altogether for Laughter, and a Profuse and Extravagant Mirth.

And when those that are chiefly concern'd, behave themselves thus with a decent, modest chearfulness, and so as to give no encouragement to any thing that is unseemly and excessive, but rather shew an uneasiness at any offers of that nature: There may be freedom and plenty without Lewdness and Intemperance, and that foul way of conversation, which is very unbecoming both a Man and a Christian.

He therefore that desires Christ's Blessing upon his Marriage, (and without which he may be sure it will not Prosper) must be careful that the rejoycings at it be not such as will be displeasing to him, nor such as will make any Pious Person uneasy, and force him to depart: For 'tis a very Inauspicious beginning of Wedlock, when Lust, and Filthiness, and Brutish Excesses, and every thing that is hateful to God and all Good Men, is the whole employment of our Wedding Feasts.

As for the want of Wine that was at this Marriage in *Cana*, it might probably be occasion'd by the resort of more Com-

pany than was expected, who came thither out of Curiosity to see Jesus; for he had now entred upon his Ministry, and began to be Publicly known and taken notice of. And therefore the Blessed Virgin, lest any Reflections should be made upon the new Married Couple, thro' the want of what at such times is always free and plentiful, especially when that want was caused by those that came thither upon account of her Divine Son: Privately acquaints him that the Wine grew low.

Ver. 3.

But why should she trouble Jesus with a thing of this Nature, who was but a Stranger there, and in no visible Capacity of helping them to a supply?

The Holy Virgin, no doubt knew very well, that the time drew near of his declaring himself to be the *Messias*, and of his doing such wondrous Works, as should be a sufficient demonstration that he indeed was so: For he had already received the Testimony of St. John the Baptist, (who saw the Heavens open'd, and the Spirit of God descend upon him like a Dove, &c.) that he was the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World; and had called several Disciples. Now this want of Wine at a Publick Marriage entertainment

Matt. 3. 16, Baptist, (who saw the Heavens open'd, and
17. the Spirit of God descend upon him like a

1 Joh. 29. Dove, &c.) that he was the Lamb of God
37. &c. that taketh away the Sins of the World; and

tainment, 'tis probable she thought would be a very fit opportunity for him to *Manifest* himself; and therefore told him of it in hopes that his goodness would incline him to make use of his Divine Power to prevent the Bridegrooms shame, by making up that failure which was occasion'd by the unlook'd for number of his followers.

How kind, and truly good was this concern of Holy *Mary* for the Reputation of the new Married Pair? It should teach us a Lesson of Humanity and Brotherly Love; and such a generous care for one anothers ease, and quiet, and good Name, as to prevent, as much as in us lies, whatever we foresee would cause vexation, or discredit to our Neighbour. Thus I am sure we desire to be dealt by our selves, and yet how widely different is most Peoples practice with respect to others! How ready are we to forward every thing that tends this way, and then with a World of Ill Nature, please our selves mightily with it, and make it matter of Ridicule and Censure! But he that Loves his Neighbour as himself, and he is a very Ill Christian that don't, will be as tender of his Repose and Credit, as of his own; and either prevent his Mistakes

or excuse them, and cover or supply his defects, and be truly griev'd and troubled when he can do neither.

But what was the answer Jesus gave his Mother, when she applyed her self to him upon this occasion? We have it in the 4th Verse, *Woman what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.* This, at first sight, seems very Rough and Disrespectful, and not agreeable to the Meek Temper of our Lord, and that Reverence which should be paid to a Parent by a Child; and might justly discourage the Blessed Virgin from expecting any thing of that nature, at that time. But we find she understood it in a milder Sense, by her immediately thus charging the Servants, *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

Ti iquō
ni ov.

And, upon duly considering the Original, the meaning may very well be this, *What doth the providing Wine concern either you or me? What is it to me and thee?* That's the literal Translation; as if he had said, *Let them take care of it to whom it Properly belongs, but we are only Guests and Strangers.*

But had our Lord said no more than this, tho' the Roughness and seeming Disrespect of it is taken off by this Interpretation,

pretation, yet the Blessed Virgin would have had but little Reason to think that he would concern himself about it; 'twas his adding, *Mine hour is not yet come*, that encourag'd her to bid the Servants do whatever he should order them.

For that Word *yet* might well be understood by her as a grant of her Request, tho' not just then; and her not saying any thing more to him about it, only charging the Servants punctually to observe his directions, shews that she did so apprehend it.

Now the reason of Jesus thus putting his Holy Mother off for the present, and yet doing the Miracle so quickly after, may be, either his desire of doing it in the most private manner, with the least observation, as for the most part we find he afterwards took care to do his other Wonders; which should teach us great Modesty and Humility in the exercise of even the most Noble Gifts, without the least Tincture of Vain-Glory and Self-Seeking, or just occasion given to any one to Censure us as Guilty of it: Or else it was to let us know, that private regards should have no place in our discharge of any Publick Function; that our nearest Relations and best Friends should

should have no influence There, but that we fix our eye intirely upon the directions that God hath given us, and make it our sole Aim to do him all the Honour, and our Brethren all the Good we can in our several Stations, in firm resolution of not being sway'd otherwise by any Solicitations what ever, from whomsoever they may come. *Woman*, says Jesus to his Holy Mother, (as if he had then forgot his near Relation to her,) *What have I to do with thee*, in things of this high Nature? "Tho' I was subject
 "to thee when in a private Life, yet now,
 "you must not interpose, but leave me
 "to a higher Guidance in finishing the
 "great Work which I came into the
 "World to do. *Mine hour is not yet come*,
 "and I am the best Judge of the Places,
 "and Times, and Seasons, of exerting
 "the divine Power which my Heavenly
 "Father hath given me, so as may most
 "conduce to the great ends for which
 "I have received it.

And agreeably we find, *12th Mat. 46.* when our Lord was surrounded by great numbers of People, whose Diseases he healed, and who were listning to his Heavenly Discourses, and *his Mother and his Brethren stood without desiring to speak*

but di- and the od m ife m n, he ,) of Et v, ie e e, s, g y t n

He *speaks with him, and could not come at him for the Press, and whose business, probably, was to desire him not to spend himself too much, nor go too far in Exasperating the Scribes and Pharisees against him, by his free and sharp and open Reproofs; he answered to one that told him of it, Who is my Mother, and who are my Brethren? "I have no Regard to Private Friendship and Relation, in Prosecuting the great Affairs of my Office and Ministry; And then, He stretched forth his Hand towards his Disciples, and said, Behold my Mother and my Brethren, for whatsoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother.*

But to proceed; in the Sixth Verse we are told, *That there were set there six water Pots of Stone, after the manner of the Purifying of the Jews, containing two or three Firkins a piece.* For at every common Meal they had frequent use of Water, to wash their Hands before they Eat, and to rinse their Cups and other Vessels, besides what was provided for their Drinking, and they were Superstitiously Nice and Scrupulous in such things; and therefore at their publick Feasts greater preparation than ordinary was made of Water

Mark 7.
2, &c.

ter for these uses : As here were six Large Water pots of Stone, and which were almost empty'd, and Jesus order'd the waiters to fill them once again, *and they filled them up to the Brim.*

We may well think the Servants wondered what should be the meaning, that after the Blessed Virgin had told her Son of the want there was of Wine, he should bid them fetch so great a quantity of Water, which they had no need of. But they Remembred the Charge She gave them, and therefore readily obey'd his Orders, without further questioning what was the design of them, as otherwise 'tis Probable they would have done ; for to all Appearance 'twas but labour in vain, which Servants in the hurry of a Feast, are not over Hasty to undertake at the sole direction of a stranger. But, how odd soever the thing might seem to them, they presently did it, and not without great expectation of what would follow.

Now from this Passage, we may Learn, that a ready and cheerful Obedience to our Great Masters Commands, must make way for the Wonders of his Mercy to us ; ; and be the Commands seemingly never so strange and unusual, never so contrary to our own Judgments and Inclinations,

inclinations, full of Labour and Difficulty, and as we may think to little or no purpose; yet let them be observ'd without delay, with a sincere diligence, not unwillingly and by halves, but throughly to the best of our Power, in a faithful expectation of the Blessed Consequence: And then in our Lords good time, we shall plentifully reap the happy fruits of our Obedience to his Glory and our own unspeakable Joy and Satisfaction.

But if we are faithless and backward, and dispute the Expediency, or think much of the labour, or question the practicableness of any of the commands of Jesus; we do but deceive our selves, if we think to share in the Favours and Felicities, which God hath impowered him to bestow on those, who *do whatever he Commands*: For 'tis in vain to expect to be treated as his Friends, and to enter into his Joy, without being Diligent and Faithful in his Service.

Jo. 15. 14.

Matt. 25.
21.

Ye therefore, that pretend to be his Servants, *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*; do it with Alacrity, and let nothing be wanting to compleat what he hath given you in charge; spare no Pains, make no Objections, desist not till you have done your utmost, and then, with humble

ble Confidence in your Great Masters Power and Goodness, trust the Event with him.

For when the waiters had fill'd the Water pots with Water, and that even up to the Brim; He saith unto them draw out now, and bear unto the Governour of the Feast, and they bare it.

And then they saw to what good purpose their labour was bestow'd; then their Wonder ceased, that when Wine was wanting he should make them drudge for Water; and a much greater wonder took its place, when that same Water was become most rich and generous Wine: For when the Governor of the Feast, or he, that according to the Custom of the Jews, was to take care of the decent and orderly management of every thing, had tasted of the Water that was thus made Wine, and knew not whence it was, tho' the Servants that drew it knew; He called the Bridegroom and said unto him, every Man at the beginning doth set forth good Wine, and when Men have Well drunk then that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good Wine until now.

Now this, could not but make the Bridegroom wonder extremely, who knew the Stock he had laid in was Spent, and

and was under the uneasiness of so shameful a failure at his Wedding-Feast, and very probably could by no means presently provide a new supply.

But when upon further enquiry the Servants related the whole matter, and told how they had fill'd the Water Pots with Water at the direction of Jesus; and up to the Brim too, (so that no room was left for any mixture of what might make it look or drink like Wine;) and then that at his command they drew some out, and gave it to the Ruler of the Feast, who having tasted the Noble Liquor, and as yet knowing nothing of its Miraculous Production, commended the Bridegrooms unusual Generosity, as we have heard; and every one being himself a witness of the great plenty and extraordinary goodness of the Wine: How were they all seized with inexpressible Astonishment! And what a flush of Holy Joy, think we, fill'd the Soul of the Blessed Virgin at this first Manifestation of the Glory of her Divine Son! And what full conviction was this, to every one that would not obstinately resist it, that he was the expected Christ! For nothing could effect so great a Miracle as this, but the Almighty Power of God, who

who would not, we may be confident, communicate that Power of his to an Impostor and Deceiver. And accordingly the Text says, that by this wondrous Work, *He manifested forth his Glory, and his Disciples believed on him.*

Indeed, none but the Lord of Nature, or one assisted by his Power, could by a bare Act of his Will, without either Word or Touch, or the infusion of any thing whatsoever; immediately turn Water into the richest Wine. Here, the Subject of the Miracle was a Senseless *Element*, and so there could not be any assistance given by a working fancy, and strong imagination, towards this wondrous change, nor could any Charm or Incantation have Power here; nothing could be sufficient in this case, but that same Omnipotence, which turns the Waters of a Shower, into the juice of the Grape, and did that in an instant at the Marriage in *Cana of Galilee*, which it effects more leisurely and in a natural way in every Vineyard. Only with this addition, that the Wine was then ready fitted for the Table and the Palate and in absolute perfection in its kind, as being produced immediately by God.

Now

Now this should teach us, intirely to put our trust in the Divine Providence in all our Straits and Exigences, whether Publick or Private; tho' his disposal of us, and the method he takes with us, appears to our apprehension never so unpromising. For 'tis Gods usual way to Relieve and Succour the most Pressing wants and miseries of his Servants, and to bring to pass Publick or Private deliverances, and other his great and good designs, by such unlikely means, and in such an unexpected manner, as may convince every one that 'tis his doing; that they may not ascribe it to the Power of second Causes, or their own Endeavours, but purely to the Hand of God, *who only* Psal. 136.
4.
can do Wonders.

The Scripture story is full of instances of this nature, and so are other Histories; and a Man of any Observation, will find it so in his own time, and perhaps in his own Family and Person.

When therefore, by a Life of Sincere Religion, (for nothing else but that will do it) we are once intitled to the peculiar Care and Providence of God; then, whatever our circumstances may be, how dark and cloudy soever they may look, and perhaps every day more and more so, no

B

pro-

probability appearing of their clearing up, but all our prospect threatning the contrary; let us but commit our way unto *him*, in full assurance of the Wisdom and Goodness of all his Disposals, and of his infinite Power to bring to pass whatever he shall see convenient for us, believing him to be the best Judge of that convenience, and by no means neglecting the performance of our Duty to him; and we shall find our selves by some unthought of turn or other, either reliev'd or supported, our circumstances will be better'd, or we shall be better reconciled and suited to them. We shall either have Prosperity and Plenty, or Content will supply the want of it; the Waters of our Affliction shall be turned into the Wine of Rejoycing, or else Gods secret Comforts and a quiet Conscience, shall fill our Hearts with more and truer gladness, than we ever experienced in the Days of our great-

Psal. 4. 7. est Sun-shine, when our Corn, and Wine, and Oil increased.

And let us not be discouraged by *delays*, for when God's time is come, we shall not fail of his assistance; and *then* for the most part is his time of succour, when the necessity is greatest, and relief can be had no where else. And as when

Jesus

Jesus supplied the want of Wine, it was admirably good and in great abundance; so whenever he does appear to bring relief, *the riches of his Goodness* make ample amends for his delaying it, and our patient waiting his leisure. But he that is full of Repineings, and distrustful of his makers Goodness and Power, deprives himself of any extraordinary expressions of either; for we read, that even in his own Country, among his own Relations, Jesus did not *many mighty works because of their unbelief.* Matt. 13: ult.

As for what the Governour of the Feast observed in Commendation of the Bridegroom, *every man at the beginning doth set forth good Wine, and when Men have well drunk, then that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good Wine until now;* 'tis exactly the method God takes with those whom he loves best, and directly contrary to the practice of the Devil with those he would destroy.

At first, how full of Blandishment and Flattery is that deluding Spirit! How does he insinuate into our Affections by waiting upon our Pleasures, gratifying our sensual Appetites, supplying us with great variety of the best Relish'd, that is, forbidden enjoyments, displaying before

us infinite Allurements, and promising a World of Happiness, if we'll give our selves up to his guidance and direction! But then at length, when we have drunk deep of this Delicious Poyson, and begin to feel the sad effects of it in a ruined Health and Fortune, and the horrors of a guilty Conscience, and have dreadful expectations of the Wrath to come, which perhaps is near approaching; how different then is his behaviour towards us! How does he Insult and Triumph over his miserable Prey, aggravating our guilt beyond all hopes of Pardon, that he may sink us into Despair and thereby secure our Ruine!

But the method of our Wise and Gracious God is otherwise, he kindly reserves for us the *Best till Last*; and tho' at first he may put on the appearance of Austerity and Severity, and see it needful to Correct our Faults and Follies by various methods of his Heavenly Discipline, and then by frequent tryals to exercise our best Graces, and improve them by that exercise; tho' he with-holds what would be hurtful to us however earnestly we may desire it of him, and weans us from the World by divers Crosses, Troubles and Disappointments, lest we should grow too fond of it

it and forget our Heaven: Tho' he puts all these seeming hardships upon us, 'tis not that he delights in our smart and uneasiness, or grudges us the pleasures of the World, and the full gratification of our senses; but because he knows we are so much above them, that they can never make us happy, and hath prepared for us such as infinitely exceed them, and which, should we indulge our Bodily Appetites too much, we should never be capable of enjoying; and likewise because Wickedness and Folly are so *bound up in* Prov. 22. *our Hearts, that nothing but the Rod of* 15. *Correction will fetch them out.*

Thus all that looks unkind and harsh at first in the Government of our Divine Parent, is only the effect of his great Love and Goodness, and design'd to make us truly Wise and Happy; and 'tis so temper'd too, with inward Comforts, cheering Hopes, and glorious Expectations, to those that Comport themselves under it with due Patience and Resignation, and consider whose Discipline it is, and for what end 'tis used; that even at present the satisfaction they feel is far beyond what the greatest sensual delights can give. And whereas *they* soon grow Flat and Insipid, and sink to nothing

even in the very enjoyment, *this is* daily improving, and rising still higher and higher, till it comes to that *fulness of Joy* which is reserv'd for them above.

So that, as our great Enemy, by broad, smooth ways brings us to destruction, and shuts up the counterfeit Scene of Happiness with a most Tragical Conclusion; our Wise and Merciful Saviour, by rough and narrow Paths conducts us to the

Mat. 7. 13, Regions of Eternal Rest and Glory.

14.

And how infinitely more desirable is it, to undergo God's smartest Discipline in this our state of probation, and then be admitted to a participation, in great degrees, and to endless Ages, of the unspeakable Felicities of Heaven; than to have all the enjoyments of this Life, and then drop for ever into the Flames of Hell!

In all respects the Condition of a Wicked Man grows daily worse and worse; his Soul is still fouler and fouler, and therefore more and more hateful and abominable to God; his Conscience grows more and more clamorous, or else which is still worse, quite Stupid and Insensible; the measure of his iniquities fills up apace, and the divine vengeance makes equally large approaches; his very darling vices lose their relish, and every

every day he's wearier than other of his Carnal Heaven, and tho' cloy'd and surfeited with it, yet very far from satisfied. And so the Wretch speeds on from one degree of misery to a greater, till he comes to the greatest of all, and which shall last for ever.

But 'tis quite another thing with the sincerely good. Their Soul becomes purer and purer, and Religion consequently more easy and delightful; their Conscience is calm and quiet, and its inward applauses fill them with unknown rejoycings; the prospect of their future glory, grows brighter and more enravishing, and makes them overlook the trifling pleasures and prosperities of this World, and forget the comparatively light afflictions of it; every day brings them still nearer unto Heaven, and makes them fitter for it, and the thoughts of this begins a Heaven upon Earth.

And when the blessed time shall come, when the days of their probation shall be finished, and admittance given 'em into their Masters Joy, how will their longing Souls then struggle to get free, and when they are so, mount up as quick as lightning to the embraces of their Saviour,

viour, and there experience such transports as cannot be expressed!

Prov. 4.
18.

Thus is the way of the Just as the dawn of the Morning, which tho' lowring and gloomy at first, yet *shineth more and more unto the perfect day*. Thus does the Blessed Jesus reserve the Best till Last, for those that Love him in sincerity. Thus

Ecclef. 4.

does Wisdom *exalt her Children, and they that seek to her early shall at length be filled with joy. And tho' at first she walk with them by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon them, and exercise them with her Discipline, until she may trust their Souls and try them by her Laws; yet will she return the straight way to them, and comfort them, and shew them her secrets.*

Wisd. of
Sol. Chap.
5.

Then at the close of all things as 'tis verily feelingly expressed in the Book of Wisdom, "Then shall the Righteous Man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him and made no account of his Labours; when they see it they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and be amaz'd at the strangeness of his Salvation so far beyond all that they look'd for. And they repenting and groaning for anguish of Spirit, shall say within themselves, this was he whom we sometime had in Derision, and a
"Pro.

“Proverb of Reproach. We Fools coun-
“ted his Life Madness, and his End to
“be without Honour; how is he num-
“bred among the Children of God and his
“lot is among the Saints! Therefore have
“we erred from the way of Truth, and
“the light of Righteousness hath not
“shin’d unto us, and the Sun of Righte-
“ousness rose not upon us. We surfeited
“our selves in the way of Wickedness
“and Destruction; yea we have gone
“through deserts where no way lay, but
“as for the way of the Lord, we have
“not known it. What hath Pride pro-
“fitted us, or what good hath Riches
“with our vaunting brought us? All those
“things are passed away like a shadow;
“and even so we in like manner were
“consumed in our own Wickedness. For
“the hope of the ungodly is like the dust
“that is blown away with the Wind, like
“as the smoke which is dispersed here and
“there with a Tempest. But the Righ-
“teous live for evermore, their reward
“also is with the Lord, and the care of them
“is with the most high. Therefore shall
“they receive a Glorious Kingdom and a
“Beautiful Crown from the Lords Hand,
“for with his Right Hand shall he cover
“them, and with his Arm shall he protect
“them. To

To conclude then, in a few Words, our observations upon this First Miracle; let us be so wise as in all the straits of our Worldly Circumstances, the discouragements and difficulties we may meet with in the sincere practice of Religion, or any afflictions which God shall please to exercise us with; let us be so wise as to look forward to the happy *End* of all, and encourage our selves in a patient persevering Piety, in full assurance that all these things are actually working together for our good.

And let us but apply our selves in all our necessities to Jesus for his help, patiently waiting his Good Time, and constantly and carefully observing his directions, and firmly believing that if we are not wanting in sincere Love and Obedience to him, he will not be wanting in his providential care of us; and then we need not question but he will conduct us safely, by such ways and methods as he sees to be most expedient, through all the various turns and changes of this mortal life, and finally crown us with the Blessed end of our pious hopes and Labours, the Salvation of our Souls.

Which he grant for the sake of his own Infinite Compassions. Amen! Amen!

The

The Second Miracle,
*St. Peter's prodigious draught
of Fishes.*

Luke V. 4, &c.

*Now when Jesus had left speaking, he said
unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and
let down your Nets for a draught, &c.*

IN the first verse of this Chapter, we find the People with great eagerness pressing upon our Saviour to hear the Word of God, as he stood by the Lake of Genesareth; and in the third we are told, that for his more commodious discoursing to them, he went into a Ship, a small Fisher Boat of Simon's, which stood by the Lake empty, and pray'd him that he would thrust out a little from the Land, and then he sat down and taught the people out of the Ship.

What mysteries are concealed under this passage, I leave to those to shew, who can make a mystery of every thing;
and

and in the *Romish* comments on the place, we may see what a fruitful fancy can do, that is set on work by interest, and resolv'd to improve every little accidental circumstance into a mighty argument for the supremacy of St. *Peter* and his Successors, and that Christ, because he went into *Peter's* Ship and taught, hath plac'd his infallible chair in the Church of *Rome*, to which all the World must resort that they may be instructed in the true Doctrine of Christianity.

2 Pet. 3.
17.

Such stuff as this, they ought to be ashamed of, and deeply to repent of too, as really exposing our Holy Religion to Contempt; and Burlesquing the Scriptures of the New Testament, as much as the ridiculous Comments of the *Talmud*, do those of the old. So that the best observation from hence, I think, will be this, That 'tis a dreadful thing, even in the judgment of St. *Peter* himself, to wrest the Holy Writings to the vile purposes of an intriguing party, and force God's Word to plead against him. 'Tis indeed to make it what they blasphemously stile it when not interpreted by their unerring Church, a *Leaden Rule*, *Unsent'd Characters*, and *Words of Wax*, which may be

be turned any way, and suited to any opinions, how crooked and untrue soever. A wretched Doctrine this, and Practice truly Antichristian!

Now when Jesus had left speaking to the People, who were standing thick upon the Shore, and loath to leave that Heavenly Charmer, who Charmed so Wisely that never Man spake as he spake, and probably might hope that this was a pause only to recover himself a little, and that he would again pursue those Divine Arguments which they so delighted to hear; that he might give the deeper impression to what he had been discoursing, and convince the People and the Owners of the Ships too, (whom he intended from that time to make his constant attendants, and take into the number of his Apostles,) that 'twas not bare Humane Eloquence that took them so, but strictly and properly the Word of God, and that he was indeed the Wisdom of the Father: He said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, or thrust back your Boat a little further into deep Water, and let down your Nets for a Draught; that they might see by the wonderful success, the more than humane Power too of him that had been Preaching so divinely to them.

And

And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toil'd all Night and have taken nothing, nevertheless at thy Word I will let down the Net. Indeed, 'twas because they had been labouring so long to no purpose, that Jesus then bid him to let down his Nets: For if at his command the Nets should immediately be filled, and that in the heat of the day, when multitudes of People were moving upon the Shore, which after all their skill and toil for a whole Night were drawn out empty; 'twould be a demonstration that his Power was truly Divine, to whose meer Will the Fishes of the Sea thus paid obedience. And so it was, that as soon as the Net was let down, it inclos'd so great a number Fishes that it brake, and when the Partners of Simon that were in the other Ship came to help him, they fill'd both the Ships so that they began to sink. This, as well it might, was greatly astonishing to all, but especially to Peter, who was so struck with it, and saw so much of the Hand of Omnipotence in it, that he fell down at Jesus's knees, in the posture of adoration as to God himself, and as if overcome with the Majesty of his glorious presence, said unto him, Depart from me, for I am a sinful Man O Lord!
But

But Jesus graciously encourag'd him and said, *Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch Men*: By which he adopted him into a Partnership with himself in the great work of Preaching the Gospel, and intimated to him that hereafter he should be engaged in a more noble sort of Fishery, and be as wonderfully successful in catching the Souls of Men and drawing them powerfully and in great numbers into the enclosures of his Holy Church as he had then been in filling his Nets with Fish.

And what he said to *Peter*, he said to the rest of the Apostles, and to their Successors the Bishops, and other Ministers of the Kingdom; and accordingly, not only *Peter*, but his Partners too, *Andrew*, *James*, and *John*, immediately left Matt. 4. all and followed *Jesus*, or gave themselves 19, 22. up intirely to his service.

Now one great end of our Lords working this Miracle, being to shew *Peter* and those that were with him, the mighty Success of that Office and Function he design'd hereafter to employ them in, how unlikely soever it might appear at present, they being Poor and very Illiterate, and seemingly not at all qualified for so great a Work; we shall in considering it observe some things relating to the

the Office of the *Ministry*, and likewise what correspondent duties and obligations lie upon the People, that their Faith, and our Labours, may not be in vain.

And first, our Lords telling them that he would make them *Fishers of Men*, intimates the nature of the Ministerial Office; that 'tis an employment full of care and labour, and of very uncertain success; and that all the patience, and watchfulness, and art-full management and contrivance which they used in following their Trade of Fishing, would be necessary in their winning over Souls to Christ; and very often, after all their toyl, they should meet with great disappointments.

And accordingly, whenever the work of the Ministry is spoken off by our Lord or his Apostles, 'tis represented either by the laborious skill of Husbandry, or Building; or the careful vigilance and courage of a good Shepherd, in those Countries which abounded with Beasts of Prey; or by sweating in the Harvest, or working in a Vineyard, digging, pruning and dressing it, picking out the weeds and stones, and ridding it of every thing that would hinder its bringing forth plenty of good Fruit.

So

So extremely mistaken are they, who look upon the Clergy as an Idle Dronish sort of Men, and therefore grudge them that Maintenance which they do so little for: Those who best knew their Office, we see were of another Opinion, and to which methinks every one that pretends to be a Christian, should readily subscribe.

And that which makes their Labours much heavier and more uncomfortable than otherwise they would be, is the small success they meet with. How many days and nights too do they toil to do their Brethren service, to *build them up in our most Holy Faith, to redeem them from their vain Conversation*; and perswade them to be happy; and yet too often *take nothing*, but bestow their best endeavours to no purpose.

Now, let a Man of any other employment make it his own Case, and think how he could bear such constant disappointments! The more there is of Industry, and Care, and Diligence, the greater is the Discouragement when it proves in vain. And therefore if the duty of the Ministers of Christ, be in it self so difficult, and design'd purely to promote the true happiness of Mankind; and
C yet

yet through Mens Obstinacy is for the most part so unsuccessful, that it sinks their Spirits at the same time when their business becomes doubly laborious: 'tis highly ungrateful, as well as false and unreasonable, for People to upbraid the Profession with Idleness and Sloth.

It should rather give them such a feeling sense of the weight as well as usefulness of the Ministerial Function, as to render it as light and easy as is possible, by making the best use of the pains we take amongst them for their Eternal Good. I'm sure 'tis for their best Interest to do so; for tho' it causes us great trouble to see our People so careless of *the one thing needful*, yet in the Conclusion their's will be the Misery: A Misery beyond conception great, and yet so justly due, so thoroughly deserv'd, that it scarce leaves room for pity.

And were not the consequence so dreadful on their side, the concern would be much less on ours; but to see those whom Jesus hath committed to our care to win them over to his most gracious Service, and fit them for his Joy, stop their Ears hard against all our Perswasives, Disregard our Admonitions, Despise our Reproofs, Laugh at our Instructions, and
with

with all the eagerness imaginable and fatal obstinacy, press on to endless Ruine: this is a Melancholy Sight indeed, and wounds us deep.

For 'tis a sad Truth, and deserves to be seriously considered, that the more we labour to save Mens Souls, the greater shall be their damnation if after all they willfully throw them away; and our care and diligence will but aggravate their Sins who are never the better for it, and make them without excuse at the Day of Judgment. And therefore, how careful should both Ministers and People be, the one that none committed to their charge, be lost for want of a due performance of their duty to them; and the other that they perish not under the means and opportunities of Salvation! The Ministers that they fail not in their pious labours, and the People that they may not be without success! How would this Animate us to labour still more abundantly, when we should see the travail of our Souls, and the work of our Lord thus prosper in our hands! And what unspeakable satisfaction would it be to us to find, that we were like to be a Saviour of Life unto Life, and not of Death unto Death!

2 Cor. 2: 16.

Nor would our Peoples Comfort and Joy be less, to perceive their *growth in Grace, and in the Knowledge and Love of their Blessed Saviour Jesus*. That they are *obedient to the Heavenly Calling, and led by the Spirit of God, and not forgetful hearers but doers of the Word*. And how great would be the mutual tenderness and affection, between such Prudent, Faithful Ministers, and such a tractable obedient People! This is the true Spirit of Christianity, in the Teachers and the Taught, and would tend to the inexpressible happiness of both. But where 'tis wanting on either side, 'twill be very uncomfortable at present, and to those who are in the fault, of dismal consequence at last.

But whether we succeed or no, we must still continue our labours; as we find *St. Peter and his Partners did, who after they had toil'd all night and taken nothing, were washing and mending their Nets*, that they might be ready for another opportunity. For though labour in vain is a very great discouragement, yet in our case, 'tis so far from being an excuse for negligence and slackness in our duty, that it should rather spur us on still more and more, that at length *by any means we might save some*. *Success*

2 Pet. 3.
18.

Jam. 1.22,
25.

Luk. 5. 2.
Matt. 4.
21.

Rom. 31.
14.

Success is in the Hands of God, he gives it when and where he pleaseth, and 'tis Mens Wickedness that keeps it back; and when we can prevail with them to do sincerely what they can on their part, God will not be wanting on his to give the Word his Blessing and make it Fruitful. Our business therefore, is still to be more and more instant with our People, by *Line upon Line*, Argument upon Argument, Perswasive upon Perswasive, *in Season and out of Season*; as soon as one attempt is². *Tim. 4* over, though it fails, diligently to prepare for another, and heedfully to consider whether any thing hath been amiss, or wanting, in our own management that we may amend it; and nicely to observe the fittest seasons and most promising opportunities, and likeliest methods of prevailing: And then, humbly to recommend the event to him, who *though Paul plants, and Apollos waters, at last must give the increase*, 1 Cor. 3. 7.

And when we have done this, we have done all that we can do; and whatever the consequence may be to our People, through their careless disregard, and untractable obstinacy, 'twill be never the less happy for us, who shall be rewarded

according to our labours, whether they succeed or no. And though, we should rejoyce exceedingly to see Religion thrive and flourish under our care, to the Honour of our Great Master and our Peoples Happiness; yet if it does not when the blame is not ours, we must support our drooping Spirits, (and which an unsuccessful Ministry must needs deject extremely, where there is any thing of tenderness and compassion) we must support, I say, our Spirits, *with the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity we have had our Conversation amongst them, and are pure from the Blood of all Men, having not failed to declare unto them the whole Counsel of God: and then, with patience and a persevering duty, wait the blessed time, when God shall turn the hearts of the disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just.* Luke 1. 17.

2 Cor. 1.
12.

Acts 20.
26.

For those, who at the Command of Jesus, and by his Authority *let down the Nets*, tho' sometimes, and for a long while it may be, and after abundance of pains and industry, they meet with little or nothing but disappointment; yet they may hope for a Draught at last, and that when they least expect it. *Master says Peter, we have toiled all the Night,* the pro-

properest season for our business, and have taken nothing, nevertheless at thy Word I will let down the Net.

He that hath a lawful call to this Spiritual Fishery, and is admitted to it by those, whom Christ hath intrusted with that Power in his absence, the Bishops of the Church; (and which is exactly agreeable to our Lord's own practice when upon Earth, who called, and made choice of, and sent, those whom he thought fit to employ in the great Work of the Gospel Ministry, and the Government of his Church, and besides whom none were permitted to meddle in so great and concerning a business) not only may but is Bound to become a Fisher of Men in the place that is assign'd him; and woe unto him if he preacheth not the Gospel, and woe to the People too, if they do not hear him and conform to his directions.

For this is the ordinance of Christ, and his Blessing will go along with it; go ye, says he, and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, &c. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, to support and give success to your Ministry; even unto the end of the World.

But he that thrusts himself into this sacred employment, without any other call than an overweening opinion of his Gifts and Abilities for it; Presumptuously invades what does not at all belong to him, and instead of a *Blessing* upon his Usurpation, must expect in conclusion what I am loath to Name.

At this rate every confident designing Man, may sett up for a Minister of the Gospel, and seduce unwary men *by their slights and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lye in wait to deceive*; But what a deplorable condition are the poor deluded People in that follow them! How can they hope to be truly Edified in the Schools of Schism, by those that *Preach without being sent*? Will God give success to those who take that Holy Office to themselves, not only without his Authority, but in a bold defiance of it? And when they are tearing his Church in pieces by divisions, and digging up the foundations of it by their destructive Doctrines; can any one be so besotted as to think, he will make their *cankrous words* as St. Paul stiles them, become true nourishment to the Souls of those that Hear them? Foolish People, to be thus bewitched by the *deceivableness of unrighteousness*!

What

What allowances God's Infinite Goodness may make for the invincible Ignorance of some well-meaning People, who have been bred up in the separation from their Youth, and meet with nothing but invectives against our excellent establishment, and are sincerely pious to the best of their knowledge; what gracious allowances God may make in this case, I cannot say, and Charity would induce me to hope well: But ordinarily, Gods Blessing is upon his own ordinances only, which where they may be enjoyed, but yet are despised and neglected, for the sake of a Ministry of every Man's own making: I tremble to think how fatal this will prove, to the far greatest number at last. For *I am against the Prophets*, Jer. 23. says God by *Jeremy, that steal my Words* 30, 32. *every one from his Neighbour——that cause my People to err by their Lyes and by their lightness, yet I sent them not, neither commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this People at all saith the Lord.* Words of great Emphasis, and that deserve to be seriously considered, by those particularly who desert God's ordinances for the inventions of Men, and that under pretence of greater Edification; which certainly is the greatest of delusions. But to proceed. When

When at the Word of Jesus they had let down their Net, *they enclosed a great multitude of Fishes, and their Net brake: And they beckoned to their partners which were in the other ship that they should come and help them; and they came and fill'd both the Ships, so that they began to sink.*

This mighty success, was so little expected, that it was the more astonishing; and those who but a little before with all their Art and Diligence for a whole Night together had taken nothing; could not but be amazed to feel the weight of the Fish, too great for the strength of their Net, so that there would be need of their Partners assistance to secure them.

Thus did Jesus intimate to *Peter* what vast numbers should be converted by his Preaching, and those who should be joined in commission with him; and which the event shewed to be true when Three Thousand were won over to the Faith of Christ by his first Sermon, and improved to Five by the next, and then daily increased by their joint endeavours to that strange degree, that the Believers in Jesus soon became innumerable.

Acts 2. 41.

4. — 4.

And how should this inspire us with new Life and Spirit amidst our manifold discouragements, who are Partners in the same

same great Work of winning Souls to Christ, and act by the same authority, and have reason therefore, in his good time, to hope for a Blessing? And the less likelihood there may appear to us of doing good, the nearer probably may be the happy time, when we shall see, both to our Comfort and our Wonder, that *our Labours have not been in vain in the Lord.*

If the abounding Wickedness of the Age we live in, and Mens daring justification of it; if their open Opposition to Religion, and professed endeavours both to dispute and ridicule it out of the World, by their Poisonous Writings and Prophane Drollery, and throwing all contempt imaginable upon our Holy Order; if the divisions that are amongst us and crumble us into a World of little Sects and Parties, each bitterly inveying and contending against other, to the manifest ruine of the true Spirit of Christianity, and the Triumph of the Atheistical in the uncertainty of our Faith, as they will construe it; if this, and a great deal more of the same stamp, gives us a very melancholy prospect, and seems to threaten us with daily less and less success, and makes us move on very heavily in a profession which is become almost

almost a common scorn: It looks withall as if the time were come for Christ to appear in the behalf of his despised, afflicted Church, and rescue her from ruine as being now in the extremity of danger.

Let us therefore consider, what greater need there is than ever of a vigorous defence against so many Enemies; how necessary our utmost efforts are to reduce our People in so general a revolt, and how base our Cowardice would be, should we *now* upon any considerations whatever, decline the service of our dear Mother, and that with all our force! and nothing seems more likely to recover that honour to the Church and Clergy, and proportionable regard to their instructions, which in the best of times they had, and are now deprived of in the worst; than for them, with a noble resolution of acting like themselves, to oppose a vicious World with as much fortitude, and undaunted constancy, when under the greatest disadvantages, as if they had all the encouragements they could desire. For this would be a very sensible argument against that spiteful Objection of *Priest-Craft* which they throw upon us, when they should see us true to our trust in the lowest ebb of our Affairs;

Affairs; and Purity of Doctrine, Innocency of Life, and a true Christian Contempt of the World, must needs shine gloriously and attract the eyes and hearts of all but the worst of Men, in the midst of so Black a Night of Impiety and Irreligion as this.

This would be a *Preparative* at least for better days, if not the dawn of them; and in time cannot fail of success. Let us go on therefore with a steady resolution to hasten *the times of refreshment* by a life of exemplary Piety, and unbyassed discharge of our Duty; and then, whether we live to rejoyce in them or not, we shall not lose our reward.

And since the Enemies of our *Sion*, however they may jangle among themselves, joyn all their forces against *us*, and cabal and conspire together for our ruine; let us be so wise as to assist and support each other by our mutual good counsel and advice, gladly embracing all opportunities of being helpful to any of our Partners in the common work, and not backward in desiring help when there is occasion.

Two are better than one, says the Wise Ecclef. 4. and Royal Preacher, *for if they fall, the one will lift up his Fellow; and how can one*
be

be warm alone? and if one prevail against him two shall withstand him, and a three-fold cord is not easily broken. And whatever kind Offices they do for one another, *they have a good reward for their Labour*, in being assured of mutual Assistance.

The Society of Good and Prudent Persons, is always of excellent use, but more especially in times of difficulty and discouragement; 'twill warm and guide our Zeal, and rectify false measures, and prevent our falling into Pernicious Errors, or conduce to our speedy Recovery; we shall mightily strengthen and encourage each other by it against the various assaults of a Cunning and Malicious Adversary, which otherwise perhaps might be too prevalent; and 'twill likewise enable us to carry on successfully any pious and useful design, which being too great for any one Man's Ability, must either fail for want of help sufficient, or at least come short of that perfection which otherwise it might have attained.

'Twill be our wisdom therefore and of great service to the interest of the Church, to supply the defects and weakness of our own Nets by making use of our Brethren; and we ought to look upon it as our great happiness, that there are so many
many

many excellent persons of our own order, as well as that superiour to us, who are so able and so willing to assist us. And let us but take due care to render our selves fit Objects of our great Masters Blessing, and be ready to joyn all hands in making the best use of those favourable opportunities which he shall please to give us; and we may hope, or our Posterity if not we, to see a return of Primitive Christianity, through his Power and Goodness who is *the Blessed and only Potentate the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.* ^{2 Tim. 6. 15.}

And what is said upon this particular, Concerns not the Clergy only, but every good Christian in their several Capacities and Stations; for the Apostle adviseth us all, *to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, (for he his faithful that hath Promised) and in order to this, to consider one another, to provoke unto Love and Good Works. Not forsaking the assembling our selves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry. Heb. 10. 23, &c.*

And in the Prophet *Malachi*, (who Prophesied not long before the coming of our Saviour,) we read that when Religion

- ligion was so quite out of Request, that
 Mal. 3. 14. *People said 'tis in vain to serve God, and what Profit is it that we have kept his Ordinances? Then, as a proper time for such*
 16. — *Religious Conferences, they that Feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkned and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him for them that Feared the Lord, and thought upon his Name, in a time of such general dissoluteness, and discouragement of all things Religious and Good, and they shall be mine saith the Lord of Hosts in the day when I make up my Jewels.*
 17. —

In short, no better way to encrease true Religion amongst us, than for the Clergy often to confer with, and advise and assist each other, as well as *Labour in the Word and Doctrine*, with their People; and for the People to add to their attendance upon the Publick Ordinances, a Private Recourse to their Spiritual Guides, and Religious Conversation among themselves with Prudence and an Unaffected Piety. And the worse the times are, the more difficult and disheartning, the more prophane and loose, the greater need is there of it; and the greater expectations may we have of a Blessing from God.

But

But let us take this along with us, that in all our Successes we give God the Glory, ascribing all to his Powerful Influence, *who alone can order the unruly Wills and Affections of Sinful Men.* And the more *unexpectedly* prosperous our endeavours are, the more still should we disclaim all *self praise*, as manifestly seeing the more especial Hand of God in it; and therefore humbling our selves before him in a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and devoutly rendring all the honour to him, to whom alone it is due.

Depart from me, for I am a Sinful Man O Lord! Says Peter when he saw the miraculous draught of Fishes which he and his Partners had caught. 'Twas their Nets indeed that inclosed them, and their skill and diligence that secured them when Peter's Net began to break; but they were sensible 'twas the Power of Jesus that brought them thither in such abundance, and that at a Season which was so very unlikely, and when they had toiled all the Night before, and in that very same Water, to no purpose.

And therefore Peter, as far from arrogating the success, upon any account to himself, makes it a motive to the lowest Humiliation and Confession of his Vileness

ness; acknowledging himself to be utterly unworthy of such wondrous favours and unfit for the presence of so Holy and Divine a Person, as fearing that his Sinfulness would soon incur his Displeasure.

¹ Habak. 16. In imitation of which excellent example, when God in any instance shall make what we do to prosper, instead of *Sacrificing to our Net, and burning Incense to our Drag*; let us remember through whose Power and Blessing it is that we have succeeded, and be led by that Goodness to Repentance. Let us magnifie him, and abase our selves; and the more he heaps his Favours upon us, become more and more sensible of our own unworthiness, and that we are *less than the least of his mercies*.

This, as it will give us a due relish and value for the Blessing, so 'twill secure us from Vain-Glory and Pride, and oblige us intirely to his service whose eyes have been thus over us for Good; that we may more and more glorifie him with those excellent gifts and endowments which we so plentifully have received from him.

For not only the success, but the very ability of doing any thing in order to it,

is

is the Gift of God. 'Tis he that assists our Meditations, and furnisheth us with such Thoughts, such Arguments and Methods of Perswasion, as at any time move our People to be serious and resolve well, and fix and strengthen those their Pious Resolutions, and excite them to a suitable practice. 'Tis he that puts into our Mouths *a Word in Season*; and when any Man is touch'd so home in any instance as that he can't but take it to himself, he ought to look upon it as directed to him by the Hand of Heaven, and receive it with Suitable Humility and Thankfulness, and an Obedient Heart. And therefore, those that are the happy instruments of doing Good, must have a care as I said of forgetting that they are *but instruments, able of themselves to do nothing, and that all their sufficiency is of God, who hath made them able Ministers of the New Covenant*, that so all the Praise may be his.

And as St. Peter and those that were with him left their Ships and their Nets to follow Jesus, and that new Spiritual Fishery, to which he called them; so should we give our selves wholly, to this great employment, *that we may be thoroughly furnished to every good work, and our pro-*

1 Tim. 4.
15.
2 Tim. 3.
17.

- fitting may appear to all. Avoiding, as much as is possible, all secular intanglements,
- 2 Tim. 2. 15. that we may study to shew our selves approved unto God, Workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of
- 1 Tim. 1. 11. Truth, according to the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, which is committed to our trust. That free from the distractions of Worldly Cares and Incumbrances, we
- 1 Tim. 4. 12. may give attendance to Reading, to Exhortation and Doctrine, and be examples to the
13. — Believers, in Word, in Conversation and Charity, in Spirit, (or Temper and Disposition) in Faith and purity; that those who are of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.
- Tit. 2. 8.

These are such great things, and require such a constant application of mind, that no Man who desires to make any considerable progress in them, will find himself at leisure for other pursuits; and even the necessary Cares of Life will take up more of his Time and Thoughts than can well be spared from that vast variety of business, and which is of equal weight too, that is included in the Care of Souls. Besides, the Affairs of the World are of so widely different, nay contrary a Nature to the Duties of the Ministry, that

who-

whoever applies himself heartily to the one, take it either way, will be very unfit for the other; and what our Great Master says to all Christians in general, is more especially applicable to the Clergy, *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon: For either you will hate the one and love the other, or else hold to the one and despise the other, for no man can serve two Masters.* Matt. 6, 24.

For this reason it is, that so many *Canons* have been made in all Christian Churches, and in our own among the rest to forbid the Clergy growing Secular and Worldly; and to prevent which a Maintenance is assigned them by the direction of God Himself, that without engaging in a Life of Business, they may have a Comfortable Subsistence *by Tythes and Offerings.* If the Clergy therefore, are to employ all their Thoughts and their Care in the great work of promoting the Salvation of Mankind, and to concern themselves as little as is possible with the World, and which in the most solemn manner they promise to do at their Ordination; it is the Peoples duty upon all accounts both of Justice and of Gratitude, to provide a competency for them.

Of Justice, because as our Lord says, the
 Luke 10.7. *Labourer is worthy of his Hire; and who goeth a warfare at any time of his own cost? says St. Paul: Who planteth a Vineyard and eateth not of the Fruit thereof? And who feedeth a Flock and eateth not of the Milk of the Flock? Do ye not know that they who Minister about Holy Things live of the Sacrifice, and they who wait at the Altar are*
 1 Cor. 9.7. *partakers with the Altar? Even so hath the*
 13. *Lord Ordained, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*

And no less are they obliged to this in Gratitude; for, as 'tis in the 11th Verse of the Chapter last mentioned, *if we have sown unto you Spiritual Things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your Carnal Things? If we have made our selves incapable of all other employments, by entering into the Work of the Ministry, and make it our great and only business to watch for your Souls, that we may be instrumental in Gods Hand to guide and conduct you to Heaven; shall a moderate livelihood be grudged us for so great a Service as this? How much rather is every one that is Taught the way to Eternal Happiness and Glory, bound with a Grateful Heart and Liberal Hand, to Minister to him that Teacheth, in all Temporal Good Things?*
 Gal. 6. 6.

Nay,

Nay, 'tis Mens own best Interest, if they consider it rightly, to disengage their spiritual Guides as much as may be from Worldly Perplexities, that they may the better discharge those many difficult and weighty duties which belong to their sacred Function, and cheerfully lay out all their time and endeavours for their Peoples good.

For how can he be supposed to study the Holy Scriptures as he ought, in order to instruct his People in them, and with Spirit and Freedom press them to an agreeable practice, and rebuke their vices and reprove their errors; whose Scanty and it may be Precarious Maintenance, sinks his Spirits, confounds his Thoughts, distracts his Mind with continual Care, and too often stops his Mouth too when he should *lift up his voice like a* Isa. 58. 1. *Trumpet, and shew the People their Transgressions and Sins,* for fear of disobliging those upon whose humoursome and uncertain kindness, he and his family depend for Bread!

And when things are come to this pass, though the Ministers case is truly Deplo-
rable, yet the Peoples is infinitely worse; who lose the unspeakable benefit of having such a wise and learned and pious guide of
D 4 Souls,

Souls, as is able to instruct them in the whole Will of God, to ease them of their doubts and scruples, to comfort them in their Sorrows, and arm them against Temptations, and is not afraid, when there is just occasion, to tell them roundly of their faults too, with a due mixture of authority and affection.

And who that have any sense of Religion, would, to save a very little Money, be deprived of such a Blessing as this? But 'tis the custom now, to advance every other profession to the height, and reward their services with the greatest bounty; and at the same time to sink the Clergy to the very bottom of Contempt and Poverty; and lay on all the weight they can to keep them down; nay, and Sacrilegiously to withhold from them what the Laws, both of God and Man, have made their due.

No doubt but great *Indifference* at least to Religion is the cause of this, and *no* Religion would in a little time be the consequence, were not our Church supported, as we trust it is, by the Arm of God; and 'tis indeed his Providence alone that can uphold it, amidst so many endeavours to lay it even with the ground.

But

But those that are in earnest concerned for the honour of their Holy Profession, and true Friends to our most excellent Establishment, and who as such, must think themselves obliged as far as in them lies, to espouse the sinking interest of both; can take no better course to do it, than to keep up the Spirits of the Clergy in these discouraging times, by shewing them such countenance, and contributing in such a manner to their wants as may raise them above need and scorn, and enable them thoroughly to do their duty; to God's Honour, the Peoples great Advantage, and the Shame and Disappointment of as many as *have evil will to Zion.*

But then, we must by no means abuse such favours by greedy encroachments, and an unsatisfied Filching for new Honours and Preferments; but, as becomes his Servants, *whose Kingdom is not of this World*, aspire no further than to such a moderate share of both, as may enable us to carry on the great work we are employed in, with a chearful easiness, and yet leave us so loose to the World, as that we may be ready to quit all, rather than in the least be hindered from following our great Master to whatever duties

duties or sufferings his providence shall call us.

They that will be Rich, says St. Paul in his advice to *Timothy*, and which I believe hath a more especial direction to the Clergy; *fall into Temptation and a Snare*;—

1 Tim. 6. But thou, O Man of God, flee these things,
8, 9, 11. and pursue Righteousness, Faith, Love, Patience, Meekness, and having Food and

2 Cor. 12. Rayment be therewith content. We seek not
14. yours, but you; says the same Apostle:

'Tis Men, not Wealth and Greatness that we are to Fish for; and if at any time we are advanced to stations of honour and advantage, St. Paul proceeds to charge us, as we are to charge our Peo-

1 Tim. 6. 7. ple, not to be high-minded, nor to trust in
uncertain Riches but in the Living God,

18. — who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. That we do good and be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for our selves a good foundation

19. — against the Time to come, that we may lay hold on Eternal Life.

And as this vast Draught of Fishes, which was a greater prize than ever yet those poor Fisher Men were Masters of, and would have raised a considerable sum to the improvement of their little stock, and the making of their Fortunes in the World;

World; as all this was readily forsaken by them that they might follow Jesus and become Fishers of Men: So no temporal advantages should cool our zeal for God's Glory nor our Love to the Souls of our Brethren, but rather inflame both to a greater degree of Ardency; in gratitude to our Divine Benefactor who hath thus comforted us on every side.

And the People likewise are equally concerned to be sincere in their profession of Religion, and not to make Godliness a way of Gain and Traffick for little underhand purposes; but purely in obedience to Jesus, and in order to their Eternal Salvation. Both Ministers and People being ready in preparation of Mind, and that in the midst of their Successes and Prosperity, to part with every thing rather than forsake their Saviour, and his Truth. *For to whom shall we go? Thou Lord* Joh. 6. 68. *only hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

reconciled, by supposing, what seems to be very probable, that one of them being more fierce and malicious than the other, and bearing the most considerable part in this extraordinary occurrence, was more particularly mentioned.

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son of our Lord willing a place to be

we enquire what should be the re-

**The Third Miracle,
A Legion of Evil Spirits cast
out of one possessed.**

Luke VIII. 26, &c.

And they arrived at the Country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when Jesus went forth to Land, there met him out of the City a certain Man which had Devils long time, &c.

Matt. 8.

IN the account St. Matthew gives of this Miracle, 'tis said that there met Jesus *two* possessed with Devils, whereas St. Mark and St. Luke speak of but *one*; which seeming difference may be fairly reconciled, by supposing, what seems to be very probable, that one of them being more fierce and mischievous than the other, and bearing the most considerable part in this extraordinary occurrence, was more particularly mentioned.

If we enquire what should be the reason of our Lords visiting a place so barbarous

barous and uncomfortable as Historians tell us, this *Gadara* was, inhabited by the worst sort of People, and very much infested with Evil Spirits? No doubt it was that he might do good amongst them, and bring them to a better sense of things, and free them from that destructive tyranny the Devil exercised over their Bodies as well as their Souls, whereby he began their Hell upon Earth, and cruelly forced them to be their own Tormentors.

And before we go any further, let this teach us in our several Stations, and according to our opportunities and abilities, to endeavour the ruine of the Devils Kingdom, and the flourishing of that of Christ, not only at home, amongst the deluded and vicious and ignorant in our own Country and Neighbourhood; but likewise with a more publick zeal and diffusive Charity, to encourage and promote the spreading of the glorious light of the Gospel in the remotest dark corners of the World, and the driving out of Satan from those miserable places where he hath had the longest and most intire Possession.

Fair opportunities have of late been offered, for those whose circumstances will

will admit of it, *personally* to engage in so excellent a Work in our Plantations abroad; under the direction and encouragement of such, as through God's Blessing, (which cannot be wanting to so Charitable and Christian a design) both have already, and still will make a great and happy progress in it. And every one of us may be assisting, though not in person, yet with our substance, by contributing towards the necessary charges of it, and supplying those Clergy Men who shall be employed in the Evangelical Service, with such helps as may enable them to perform it with Success. And no doubt but 'twill be highly pleasing to God and our Saviour so to do, and shall not lose its reward: for this is a pursuance of the great work of converting the Sinful World to God through Christ; that the most Barbarous and Ignorant, whose Souls are equally precious with ours, may be brought to the knowledge of our only Saviour, and rescued from the Clutches of the great destroyer.

This is an undertaking truly Apostolical; and the more discouragements may attend it, upon account of the great distance of the place from a Mans Native

Country,

Country, his nearest Relations and old Friends; the great difficulty and danger of the work by reason of the barbarity and untractableness of the People, the strangeness of their Language, the Treachery and Cruelty of their Disposition; and many other uncomfortable circumstances that might be thought of, and no doubt are, by those that are entring upon it: The more ready should we be, who in ease, and security, and plenty, sit at home and enjoy what they are leaving with a heavy Heart, to keep up their Spirits and fortifie their Pious Resolutions, and render all things as easy to them as is possible, by a liberal contribution of what may make them chearfully imitate the Charity of our great Master, when he made a compassionate visit to the wretched *Gadarenes*.

Upon whose shore when he first landed, *there met him out of the City* a very Melancholy, and to any one but him, Affrighting Object, *a certain Man which had Devils long time, and ware no Cloths, neither abode in any House but in the Tombs, or burying places that were adjacent to it; (for of old time they never buried their Dead within the Walls of their Cities, but in places set apart for that purpose,* at

at some distance from them) and though he had often been bound with Fetters and Chains to keep him from doing mischief to himself and others, yet when his diabolical frenzy came upon him which was often, he would break the bands in pieces, and Night and Day make horrid noises
 Matt. 5. 5. *and cut himself with stones, and sometimes be hurried into the Wilderness, and upon the steepest Mountains, (probably that he might be tempted some way or other to dispatch himself) and was so exceeding fierce that no Man could tame him, neither could any one safely pass by where he was.*

Many such *Dæmoniacks*, or Men possessed with Evil Spirits, there were in our Saviours time and long before, and the Devils power was so great and almost universal over Wretched Mankind, (to which they had exposed themselves by their Incorrigible Wickedness) that St. Paul might well stile him *the God of this World*; the Object of their Slavish Dread, and Abominable Worship, and to whose Vile Will they paid a forced Obedience for fear of what he would inflict upon them if they should displease him.)

And Miserable indeed was their Condition, to be under the Lash of such a Merciless

Merciless Tyrant; whose great design from the beginning was to bring all the Shame and Contempt and Unhappiness upon Humane Nature that was possible in this World, and then at last to make them share in those Torments which are prepared for him in the lowest Hell. That so he might Triumph over Gods new Favourite, and in some measure revenge himself upon his Creator by ruining his Image, and treating it with the utmost Scorn and Cruelty.

And thus it was for many unhappy Ages, till the Blessed Time when *the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the Devil*; and then his Empire was broken, his deluding Oracles were silenced, Men were delivered from His Possessions, and his Tyranny was at an end. His Black Legions trembled at the Presence of Jesus and his Disciples, and were subject to their Command; and wherever Christianity was embraced, they had no power to be Mischievous or to Affright and Terrifie Men any longer by their horrid Apparitions, unless they threw themselves out of the protection of the Church by their Irreclaimable Impieties, and Wild Unchristian Principles; or were cast out for them by

1 Joh. 3. 8.

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Ecclesi.

Ecclesiastical Censures: and then, God made use of those evil Spirits as the Ministers of his Justice to inflict his Punishments upon those that deserved them, who were *delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the Flesh, that their Souls might be saved in the day of the Lord*; but when the Punishment had wrought its effect, the Offender was delivered from those Infernal Lictors; and restored again to the safeties of God's People.

1 Cor. 5.
5.

And ever since down to our Times, though in some Countries that are perfectly Heathen and Barbarous the Devils power is still very great, yet in all places where our Holy Religion is received, Men are secure from his Insults, and he can do nothing but by God's particular permission, who hath laid such restraints upon him, that no good Christian need be under any apprehension of disturbance from him.

How are we bound therefore to praise and love our Divine Champion who hath thus subdued the Powers of Darknes, and freed us not only from the greater expressions of their Malice but also from those Terrors and Affrightments which their very Appearance would cause to us. And there is no question but we should
often

often have such visits from them as would make our lives extremely uncomfortable, though they could do us no further Mischief, were they not debarred that liberty by our Gracious Lord.

Their Spiritual Nature, their Power, their Cunning and their Malice, are the same now as ever, and we should soon find it so by sad experience were they again let loose upon us; but Blessed be God they are tyed up by a power infinitely greater than their own, and 'tis but very seldom, and upon some extraordinary occasion, that they are permitted to make themselves so much as visible to Christians. A happiness this, though perhaps but little considered, yet of inestimable value, as we should soon be sensible did we but once know the want of it; and for which we are obliged particularly to magnify his Almighty Goodness, who hath thus *redeem'd us from the hand of our most Cruel Enemy, and not given us over as a prey unto his Teeth, who once went about as a roaring Lion seeking whom he might devour, and was too often successful.* Particularly in the sad instance we have now before us, how did he Tyrannize over this poor *Gadarene!*

Mark 5. 6. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and cried out, and instead of offering violence to him, as he had done to others, he fell down before him and worshipped him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God most high, I beseech thee, nay adjure thee by God, that thou Torment me not before the time! For he had commanded the unclean Spirit to come out of him.*

See how these Apostate Spirits dread the Presence of their Judge! What forc'd Worship they pay, what unwilling Prayers they offer to the Victorious Son of God most high, who once threw them down from Heaven like Lightning, and was then come to vanquish them a second time on Earth! And their Prostrations to him, no doubt went more against their Will, because he had assumed the hated *Human* Nature, and thus Triumphed over them in the likeness of Envy'd Mankind. But yet, for fear of his Just Vengeance, they become his humble Supplicants; acknowledge him to be what he was, give him his Just Titles, and with the greatest earnestness beseech him to respite their torment.

How like to this, and for the most part very little better, is the practice of a
Death-

Death-Bed Repentance! Take the most Profligate Sinner that hath any Sense of a Future State (and he that has none, seems to be more hardened than the very Devils themselves,) And when he apprehends himself to be upon the Brink of Eternity, what a good Christian is he all on the sudden! How heartily does he fall to his Prayers, how does he cry to Jesus for Mercy! Professing that he believes him to be the Son of God, and Redeemer of the World, and that 'tis *He*, only can save him from the Torments of Damnation into which he is just dropping; conjuring him for God's Sake and his own Compassions to spare him for this once and give him a reprieve, and it may be promising largely what great things he will do in return! When after all there is little more at the bottom than a dread of the Miseries of Hell (which who can choose but dread!) And which he would fain keep off if he could, and knows no other way to do it than to make a doleful out-cry to Jesus, of whose tender pity he hath heard so much.

For when the affrighted Wretch, by the recovery of his health and his safety thinks himself to be got out of danger, there's too generally at the same time an

end of his Devotion; his Religion vanishes with his Fears, and all his fair Promises are forgotten; he betakes himself afresh to his former Lewdness, and lives as much like a Brute and a Devil as ever.

Let no Man therefore think the better of himself for any Religious frights he may have been in upon some extraordinary occasion, unless they have really frightened away his Affection to sin, and engaged him in an actual and thorough Amendment of Life; for if they have not had that good effect upon him, 'tis a sign the inward disposition of his Soul is as bad as ever, only he was mightily *scared* when he thought he was just going to be for ever damn'd, and cry'd aloud for Mercy and Forbearance. But this is no more than the Devils themselves, we see, are forc'd to do sometimes; they Believe, and Tremble, and Worship, and pray too that Christ would not hasten the completion of their Torment, and yet are Devils still.

But what was their meaning when they begged of Jesus not to Torment them *before the time*? I suppose it was, that when he had cast them out from the possessed Man, he would not immediately

ly plunge them into the *lowest Hell*, and make them suffer that high of Torment there before the Day of Judgment which then they knew they must be for ever consigned to, but they hoped not till then. For in the 31st Verse of this Chapter, 'tis said *they besought him, that he would not command them to go out into the deep*, which in the 20th Rev. 3^d. is called the *Bottomless Pit*, into which the Old Serpent was cast and bound and for ever Tormented, v. 10. and in St. Jude 'tis said, that the Fallen Angels God hath reserved in *Everlasting Chains under V. 9. Darknes unto the Judgment of the great Day.*

When this great Day should be they knew not, as neither do the *Angels of Matt. 24. Heaven*, but they supposed it must be³⁶. some considerable time e're it could be, because many things that were to be accomplished first, in all probability could not be so yet a great while; and therefore, dreading least the Torments of the Fiery Abyss, should upon this occasion become their Portion so long before the general Day of Doom, they beg of Jesus not to Antedate their Misery, but give them leave still to continue in these Upper Regions, which in comparison with that

dismal place were pleasant and refreshing.

Now from this passage we may observe, not only that meer Spirits, as well as those that are joyned to Bodies, have Torments adapted to their Natures, such as arise immediately from their own Thoughts, the horrid reflections of their own enraged, despairing guilty minds, so that the Soul of Man, even in the state of separation may be exquisitely Miserable; but likewise that these Torments may be very much increased by the condition of the place to which those Evil Spirits and Wicked Souls shall be confined, the sad circumstances of which may add new *outward* Terrors to those that are *within*, that so their Misery may be as compleat and full as they are capable of Suffering.

For as here in this World, though the Soul is a Spirit, and the Body is Matter, yet a diseased and tortured Body imprisoned in a dismal Dungeon would make the Miseries of an awakned sinful Soul still greater and more insupportable; so in the World of Spirits, no doubt but God can so contrive a place of habitation for those that are Wicked as that it shall very much highten their inward Pains
and

and Agonies, and by an eternal succession of strange unknown horrors, aggravate the Torments even of despair itself: For *who can tell the Power of his wrath!* Psal. 90.
11.

And accordingly, all the descriptions we have of Hell in Scripture, as they are exceeding terrible, so they give us reason to believe that there shall be some particular *place of Torment*, to which at the consummation of all things, all Wicked Spirits shall be driven, and there for ever *weep and wail and gnash their teeth* under Jude 7. the inexorable and most heavy Wrath of God, *and suffer the vengeance of Eternal Fire.*

So that, though the Souls of Wicked Men, even in their separate state before the Resurrection of their Bodies are no doubt very miserable and like the Devils in dreadful expectation of *the wrath to come*; yet 'tis the sad Sentence, *depart ye cursed into everlasting burnings*, that will at the last Day for ever Seal up both their Bodies and Souls to that *fulness of Misery and Sorrow* which is *prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, in the *Infernal Pit*.

And therefore, whatever Objections may be made against the Credibility of
meer

meer Spirits being capable of such Tortures as are mentioned in Scripture, and that in such a sort of place as is there described; we see there is nothing in the nature of the thing but what is very conceivable, and 'tis plainly asserted in the Holy Writings, and the Devils themselves as plainly intimate it in the passage now before us.

However as to *us*, our Bodies at the Day of Judgment being to be again United to our Souls, does make it past dispute that *we* shall be as sensible then as ever if not more so, of Bodily Pain and Torment; and ~~fall~~ ^{all} of the Misery arising from the sharpest Inflictions, that an Irreconcilably Angry God can lay upon us, in the most Dismal Place, and most Wretched Society in the whole Creation.

This, no Christian can doubt of; and as for further Curiosity as to the *when*, and *where*, and *how*, it does not at all become a guilty Sinner; whose main business and greatest Wisdom is to fly from, not Pry too Close into these Terrible secrets of the dark Kingdom. And may our dearest Saviour shrowd us under the wings of his Mercy, and keep us from ever knowing more of those Regions of Despair and Horror, than the account of
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the Scripture gives us to affright us from them!

Wherefore to Proceed; when upon our Lords command to the evil Spirit to come out of the Man that was Possess'd, (and which was too Powerful for all the force of Hell to resist) the Devil had besought him, as we have heard, not to send him immediately down into the Deep, Jesus ask'd him saying, *What is thy name?* Which question was not ask'd to gratifie his own or others Curiosity, but for this good end, that the *Gadarenes* might see what a miserable condition their Country-man was in, and be the more sensible of the mercy of his Cure, and their own great Danger amidst such vast numbers of evil Spirits as then swarm'd among them; since so many had taken Possession of that one unhappy Man as to deserve the name of Legion (above six thousand) as one of them told our Lord in the name of the rest, in Answer to his Question, *my name is Legion, for we are many.* Mar. 5. 9.

Lord, what Hellish Torments must be in that Poor Creatures Breast! No wonder that we read so much of his Desperate fury, and Dismal out-cries as we do, but 'tis a greater Wonder that he was not forced

forced to make himself away ; that so they might be secure of his Body and Soul for ever. But there is a Supreme good being above them, whose greater Power curbs theirs in, and sets them their Bounds which they cannot Pass ; who otherwise would fill the Earth with Mischief and Terror, and Innumerable dreadful Occurrences, till they had turned it into a kind of Hell.

And as God thus *Restrained* their Power even in such Heathenish and Wicked Places, that they could not Proceed to the utmost of their Malice ; so Jesus his Eternal Son intirely *Triumph'd* over it : Made thousands of Devils quit the Prey they had full Possession of, at his bare Word, and who could not enter into the foulest of Brutes but by his Permission. For when they found they must come out of the Man, they beg'd leave to enter into a *Herd of Swine that was feeding on a Mountain hard by.*

But how came so many Swine to be bred up by the Jews, and kept in great
 Mar. 5.13. Herds, as there were about two Thousand in this, when that Creature was declared unclean by the Law of *Moses*, and made an Abomination to them ? 'Tis Probable, this *Gadara* being a considerable Roman Garrison,

Garrison, the Swine that were brought up there were for the Soldiers use; to whom the *Jews* might venture to sell them, though they were not to Eat of them themselves, and run the hazard of Pollution for the sake of the great Advantage they made by them.

Now so greedy were those evil Spirits of mischief, (which is indeed the Proper Diet of Hell) that since their Tyranny over the Man was at an end, they were very earnest with Christ to suffer them to enter into the Swine; but 'tis likely with this further cunning design, that by their Destruction the Country might be set against Jesus, and made more backward to believe in him and embrace his Doctrine. This our Lord could not but see through, and knew what ruine they would immediately bring upon the Herd; but yet *He suffered them, and the whole Herd ran violently down a steep Place into the Lake and were choaked.*

And whoever had seen with what Fury the Swine rush'd into the Sea, when acted by those very evil Spirits, who but just before had Possess'd one of their Country-men, could not but be amaz'd at their destructive Power, and one would think should have so much dreaded the farther effects

effects of it, as to beg of Jesus still more and more to restrain them; and have thought themselves extremely happy in having one amongst them who could command those infernal Legions as he Pleas'd, and without whose leave they could not hurt a Swine.

But instead of this, and making that Good use of our Lords Presence there which he design'd they should; they on the contrary, (so ready are we to listen to our Destroyer rather than our Saviour) made that ill construction of what had happened, which the Devil hop'd they would, and had suggested to them: and upon News of the Drowning of the Swine, as if they had no regard to any thing but their Worldly Profit, they Unanimously came to Jesus from all Quarters, and though they saw the Man that had been Possess'd, and was but a little before so raging and mischievous, *Sitting at his Feet, cloath'd and in his right mind, they yet besought him, or earnestly called upon him, to Depart out of their Coasts.* Mat. 8. ult.

What strange behaviour was this! See how the God of this World blinds the minds of his Vassals, that they should not see the things that make for their best Interest, and let slip all happy opportunities of Grace and Salvation! The

The *Gadarenes*, being so near to *Galilee*, just over against it, on the other side of a narrow Lake, no doubt had often heard of the Fame of Jesus, and very likely were so great lovers of Novelty and strange Sight, as to wish they might see so extraordinary a Person, and have their Curiosity gratify'd with a Miracle. And yet, when out of tender Pity to the deplorable Condition their Country was in, by reason of their Heathenish way of Life, and those dreadful Possessions which were so Common there, and which He doubtless had heard much talk of in *Galilee*,

He went to them, on purpose to be in all respects their Saviour and Deliverer; and gave them an earnest of it, by working a Wondrous Cure upon a fierce *Dæmoniack*, than which nothing could have been more seasonable, nor of greater and more publick Benefit, and therefore should mightily have endeared him to them, and made them earnestly Court his stay among them: They on the contrary, with Unparallell'd——What shall I call it? 'Tis a Crime that wants a Name, and such, as one would think People that were not themselves Possess'd could never be capable of committing, were urgent with him to be gone and leave them, only, because
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he was the occasion of the loss of a Herd of Swine, for which yet, the ridding their Country from those diabolical Inn-mates, might have been thought a sufficient Compensation.

But the Text says they were *taken with great Fear*; Great Fear! of what? Of one who made it his business to go about doing good, and as the common Benefactor of mankind cur'd all manner of Diseases, without the chargeable and tedious methods of Physick, only with his Word or his Touch, as they could not but have often heard he did? Nay, who could cast out Devils too how numerous and obstinate soever, by his bare Command, forcing them to confess that he was the Son of the most High God, as they themselves were satisfy'd upon their own certain knowledge? Of one who did all this most willingly and freely, without the least expectation of Gratitude or Reward, and that in order to an Infinitely greater good too, their Harkning to his Doctrine, and embracing the Faith he taught, which would save their Souls for ever?

The Presence of so equally great and good a Person as this, instead of awakening their Fears, in all reason should have
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excited in them the highest Veneration, and Love, and Joy. But, as is most probable, the plain truth was this; they thought our Lord, being a Prophet, and zealous for the Law of *Moses*, intended totally to destroy those impure Creatures in which consisted a great part of their wealth, and likewise that so holy a Person would not let them go on in their vicious Courses, but soon oblige them to a way of Life which they had no Relish for at all, or else exert that Power of his in punishing their Wickedness which they found they were not able to resist, and that made them so eager to be rid of the geatest Treasure in the World.

Now does not our Blood rise against such vile ungrateful wretches? And yet if we consider it, is not the Case Just thus, nay worse as we shall see by and by, with too too many amongst our selves? Don't we Love the World better than we do our Saviour, and that we may enjoy it without controul, forget that we are Christians, and give our selves up to Ambition, and Covetousness, and Sensuality? Are we not afraid of any thing that would oblige us to a Reformation, shy of a faithful Friend who would advise us better, angry with our spiritual Guides if they press us home
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upon this Point; nay, which is worse, stop the mouths of our own Consciences when they cry out against us, and which is worst of all resist and grieve and quench the blessed Spirit of God when he whispers this saving Counsel to us, *Turn ye, Turn ye from your evil ways, for why, O why will ye Dye?*

Is not this to behave our selves towards our Saviour much at the rate as those *Gadarenes* did, and that for a reason not unlike, because our *swine* would be in Danger should he continue with us, and our submission to his Government would be the ruine of our Beloved Sins?

Indeed, 'tis to become perfect Swine our selves, and Prefer a dunghill before Heaven; when rather than quit the vile sordid Pleasure of feeding upon Nastiness, and wallowing in the Filth of brutish Lusts, we'll thrust out from us all that will make us truly Good and Happy.

May it not be said of us, that we even *Crucify the Son of God afresh*, when we obstinately persist in what we know he hates, and dy'd to save us from? That we *put him to an open shame* when we value our Lusts above him, nay, act our Lewdness under the character of his Disciples? But let us have a care, lest Jesus be

be Provok'd by this base usage to give us our fatal choice, and immediately Depart, as we find he did from these *Gadarenes*, and leave our polluted Souls to the full Possession of those unclean Spirits, and that Eternal ruine which they will plunge us into, and which even in the midst of the Torments of it, we shall be forc'd to Confess is no more than we have most justly deserv'd.

For as much to blame as these *Gadarenes* were in driving our Lord from them, the crime of an obstinately wicked Christian is much greater, and no doubt will be more severely Punish'd.

They had the Happiness, as far as we can Learn from Scripture, but once to see him on their Coasts, and though he wrought so great and beneficial a Miracle there, yet the noise and fright occasioned by the loss of their swine, as they took it very much lessened the value of it, (though it should have rais'd it rather, and was designed to do so) and gave them a very great though unreasonable Prejudice against him, so that without entering into any further discourse with him, which we may well believe would have created in them a much better opinion of him, they too hastily urg'd him to leave them,

and we do not find that he ever returned to them again.

But we are *often* Courted to receive him, though not by himself in Person 'tis true, yet by his Embassadors and Representatives, and the inward motions of his Divine Spirit, and that without any Terrors and Affrighting Circumstances; and yet, ungrateful Wretches as we are, we have as often rejected him, and notwithstanding a full knowledge of the wondrous things he hath done and suffered for us, have harbour'd a legion of Impieties to Bar him out.

So that whatever may be said for *them*, *we* are without excuse, and might justly have been long since abandon'd to our selves, and deprived of his Presence for ever. Especially if we consider that we add Hypocrisie to our other Guilt, and deal thus by him under the mask of a great deal of Love and seeming Veneration. For till we are come to the very highth of Wick- edness, we smooth him over with frequent protestations that we desire his Presence above all things; entreat him with an Appearance of great Earnestness and Devotion, to come and take intire Possession of our Souls, and make them his for ever, and approach his Holy table with the Pro-
foundest

foundest Awe and Reverence to receive him, and there with great Solemnity, vow all Fidelity and Obedience to him : And yet after all, *Sell our selves to work Iniquity,* ^{1 Kin. 21.} and become a willing Prey to his and our ^{25.} worst Enemy. What can possibly be more provoking than this? And how dreadful will it be in the Conclusion! No wonder, as desirous as he is of our Happiness, if he withdraws his abused favours from those that have thus rendred themselves incapable of them, and departs from those wretched Souls which are altogether *Earthly, Sensual and Devilish,* and a fitter Habitation for *Beelzebub* than Jesus; *For what Communion hath light with dark-* ^{2 Cor. 6.} *ness, and what Concord hath Christ with Belial.* ^{14, 15.}

But these *Gadarenes* were not more urgent to be rid of our Lord, than the Man he had Cur'd was *that he might be with him.* The Blessed change he found in himself upon the departure of that Infernal Legion, that Heaven in comparison of ease and quiet both of Soul and Body which he felt, fill'd him with equal Admiration and Love of him whose Powerful Command those wicked beings were forc'd immediately to Obey, and partly out of gratitude to Jesus, that he might spend the remainder of his Days in his Service,

and partly, as we may suppose, to secure himself from a return of those evil Spirits, who when Jesus was gone, he might fear would with greater Fury re-enter their former Habitation; he begg'd of him when going to the Ship to take him with him and receive him into the Happy number of his followers.

And how should every sinner that considers what a wondrous rescue his Redeemer hath wrought for him from the Powers of Hell; how miserable his condition would have been had he still remain'd under that cruel Tyranny, and what Happiness he may now hope for both in his Present and his Future State? How should he be all over Love and Praise to his Almighty Saviour, intirely devote himself to his Service, and earnestly beseech him never to let him want his Gracious Protection, that he may never fall into such sad Circumstances again?

Were we as thoroughly sensible of the greatness of our deliverance, as this Dæmoniack was of his, we should be thus Affected, and have so great a dread of coming into the Devils Power any more, that with the utmost care and circumspection we should avoid those evil Courses that will again betray us to him.

And

And since we are sure if our great Champion is with us, the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against us, with what Desire, and Joy, and Constancy should we address our selves to those Holy Mysteries, in which he is Pleas'd to Communicate himself most Intimately to us, and become one with us, and make us one with him ! Nothing Invigorates the Soul with spiritual Fortitude and Courage like that *Heavenly bread, and wine of Angels*, as the primitive Church us'd to call it, which we Partake of at the Holy Altar ; nothing will enable us to make a better defence against the furious assaults not only of *Flesh and Blood, but of Principalities and Powers, the Rulers of the darkness of this World, and Spiritual wickednesses in high Places*, than thus to be strong in our Lord and the Power of his might. And 'twill so Enlighten the Eyes of our mind too, create in us such a holy Sagacity and quickness of Apprehension in things relating to the interest of our Souls, that we shall be able likewise to see through and avoid the great deceivers *Wiles and Stratagems*, whereby he endeavours to trepan us into Ruine.

Eph. 6. 10;
&c.

When a strong man thus Arm'd, keepeth
his Palace, a Christian thus fortify'd, pre-

serves his Soul as a Habitation for his Saviour, *His goods are at Peace*, his Vertue secured from all Attempts from without, and his mind blessed with a Heavenly Tranquility and Calm within. But if, through our neglect of those means of Spiritual strength which God hath graciously afforded us, we become feeble and dispirited in the inner Man, and by our impurity force our divine Guardian to leave us; the Enemy will *come again upon us* with greater force than ever, and finding us in no Condition to resist him, *take from us all our Armour wherein we Trusted, and divide our Spoils*: Make a total Conquest of us, and disable us from opposing him any more. *And when the unclean Spirit is thus returned in Triumph unto the House whence he was cast out, and finds it empty and even swept of all true Goodness, and ready Garnish'd for his reception with vain and vitious affections; then will he go and take to him seven other Spirits more Wicked than himself, and enter in and dwell there as in his proper Place of residence and abode, and our last State shall be worser than our first.* As our Lord represents the sad case of an obstinately wicked Generation. So much does it concern us to stand upon our Guard, and keep our Souls in a truly

Luke 11.
21, &c.

Matt. 12.
45.

truly Religious Frame and Temper; that our Redeemer may be present with us by his Gracious Influences, and Inspire us with such Holy Resolution and Prudent Conduct as may defeat whatever Ill Designs the Prince of Darkness may have formed against us.

But to return to the Poor Man that was Possessed; he could not prevail it seems with Jesus to permit him to go with him, but was sent to his own House, and ordered to shew his Friends *how great things God had done for him and had compassion on him.*

The Man was now in a capacity of taking care of his Family as formerly, who no doubt had been in great affliction and suffered much by reason of his sad disorder, and would be overjoyed to see him come again in his right mind, after so long and dreadful a possession; and therefore, though 'twould have been happier for the Man himself to have gone along with Jesus, yet our Blessed Master so kindly considered the interest his Relations had in him, that he would not deprive them of the Comfort and Support which now he might be to them, but bid him go home, and tell them what had happened, that they might joyn with him in magnifying the great good-

goodness of God and rejoyce together in their mutual happiness.

Upon this denial, and with which upon the whole, he could not but be satisfied had he any Conjugal or Natural Affection, Jesus and he parted: and he went his way, and published, as he had great reason, throughout the City and all the Country thereabouts what wondrous things Jesus had done for him.

And this may teach us, that our Lord is far from allowing of the neglect of those Duties which we owe to our Families, upon pretence of giving our selves up to an extraordinary Religion and always following and conversing with our Saviour in Prayer and Meditation, and continual attendance upon the Publick

Ecclef. 3. 11. **3. Preaching of his Word.** For every thing is Beautiful in its Season, and as there is a Time for the Duties of the Closet and the Church, and which should be duly and constantly observed; so there is a Time for the Duties of Industry and Diligence in our several Callings, that we may make a Comfortable Provision for our Families, and St. Paul says, *he is worse than an Infidel* that don't observe those too; and neither of them should too much encroach upon, much less quite juggle out the other.

1 Tim. 5. 8. *Now*

Now it came to pass when Jesus was returned, that the People gladly received him, for they were all waiting for him. Joh. 8. 2.

Indeed, he was that *Sun of Righteousness* Mal. 4. 2. who arose with healing under his wings, the true light of the World, who brought inexpressible cheerfulness and refreshment, and most happy influences where e'er he pleased to shine with his Divine Favour and Presence. And still he is the same; and though he sometimes leaves us for a season, and withdraws his Comforts from us; yet if with Faith, and Patience, and Submission, we wait his leisure, he will return to us again and renew his wonted Consolations, and give us fresh experience of his wondrous Goodness, and at last receive us for ever to himself, Joh. 14. 3. that where he is there we may be also.

The

The Fourth Miracle,

Jairus's Daughter restored to Life; and a Woman Cured by the way as Jesus went to her, that had had an Issue of Blood twelve years.

Mark V. 21, &c.

And when Jesus was passed over again by Ship unto the other side, much People gathered unto him as he was nigh unto the Sea; and behold there cometh one of the Rulers of the Synagogue, Jairus by Name, and when he saw him he fell at his Feet and besought him greatly, saying, My little Daughter lyeth at the Point of Death, I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her that she may be healed, and she shall live, &c.

WHEN our Saviour was come back from the unworthy and ungrateful Gadarenes, no sooner was he Landed but

but the glad People who *were waiting for him*, flocked about him, rejoycing at his return, whose absence, though but for a little while, seemed tedious to those, who stood in need of his help. Luke 8.40.

And the first that addressed to him was one *Jairus*, a Ruler of the Synagogue, or Consistory of *Capernaum*, or that Court which was established there, as in other Cities, to take Cognizance of things relating to God's Worship and the Observance of the Law.

This Man had one Onely Daughter who lay at the Point of Death, and therefore as soon as he heard that Jesus was returned, he hastned to him, and when he saw him fell at his Feet with the greatest Veneration, and told him his Sad Case, and earnestly *besought him to come and lay his hands on her that she might be healed and live.*

All his hopes now, were in our Lord's Power and Goodness, his Child was given over by every body else and just ready to Expire; and therefore, he flies to Jesus as his last refuge, assuredly believing that she would yet Recover, if he'd be pleased to Touch her with his All-Healing Hands.

To

To this Request made in so moving a manner, Jesus hearkned with so much tenderness, as without keeping the Sad Father in the Torment of Suspense, presently to go along with him; whose fears were now turned into joy, since Jesus had vouchsafed to undertake his Daughter's Cure; and on he went mightily pleas'd and satisfi'd *in sure and certain hope.*

And as they were going, in the midst of a great Throng of People who were crowding and pressing to have a sight of that Wondrous Person, whose Miracles were so much talked of in those Parts; there was a Woman who had had a violent Flux of Blood upon her for Twelve Years, and having tried all that Art could do for her, but to no purpose, for though she had *suffered many things of many Physicians, and had spent all that she had among them, yet she was nothing better'd but rather grew worse,* and hearing such strange things told of Jesus, and what Wonderful Cures he had wrought, she was mighty desirous to apply herself to him, but being discouraged, as 'tis probable, by the Uncleanness of her Distemper which she was ashamed to acquaint him with before so much People, she

she resolved to try a new experiment, and verily believed that if she could but touch his Cloths she should be healed. And accordingly she made her way to him, and privately touch'd *the Hem of his Garment*; and with surprizing joy immediately she found that her Flux ceased, and that she was perfectly Cured.

Matt. 9.
20.

How unusual, and without precedent, and one would have thought without all ground too, was this Womans undertaking! And what Sport would her Physicians have made with her, had they known of her design! Ridiculing her Ignorance and Foolish Bigottry, in expecting more Relief from the Touch of Jesus's Cloths, than they in so long time with all their Skill could give her.

But her belief in our Lord's healing power being so strong and lively, and nothing but her Modesty hindring her from going openly to beg his help; he thought fit to give this extraordinary expression of her Faith as extraordinary Success.

For indeed, 'twas her *Faith*, as Jesus told her afterwards, that obtain'd her Cure, not the bare Touch of his Garment, which many others in that Throng had Touch'd as well as she, without perceiving

ceiving any such Vertue in them. And afterwards, when as we read in the next chapter to this, the People laid their Sick in his way, *and besought him*, probably upon the example of this Woman, *that they might touch if it were but the border of his Garment, and as many as touched it were made whole*, it was theirs, or their Friends faith that made that touch so healing to them.

Mar. 6. ult.

And so it is still in our Converſing with things ſacred, and Performing any of the offices of Religion; 'tis not the bare Performance that will make them beneficial to us, but the Affections with which we do them. 'Tis not the being near to Chriſt in his Ordinances, that Divine and only ſucceſſful Phyſician of our Souls, frequenting the places of his more eſpecial Preſence, and joyning in his Worſhip, and hearing his Inſtructions, that will be ſufficient to cleanſe us from our ſpiritual Pollutions; unleſs it be done with ſincere Piety and Devotion, heavenly Deſires and a lively Faith.

Even that great duty of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, whereby the Faithful draw neareſt of all to Chriſt, and not only touch his Garments but feed upon his Divine Body and drink his Precious Blood,

Blood, and so become one with him and he with them; even this most holy and beneficial Duty, will do us no more good than eating a piece of common Bread or drinking a glass of ordinary Wine, unless 'tis rendred effectual by a firm Faith, sincere Repentance, and undissembled Love.

'Tis such Affections as these that must draw out the purifying, healing, Virtue of the institutions of Jesus; and make our acts of Religion acceptable and attended with a Blessing.

As *Faith without Works is Dead*, so are Works without Faith; even such a Faith as makes the Man Heavenly minded, *Purifieth his Heart*, reforms his Life, and *worketh by Love*: Such a Faith as intirely depends upon the saving virtue of Christ's Blood, but so as to Perform sincerely the Conditions which he hath been Pleas'd to make indispensably necessary on our Part, in order to our Partaking of the Merits of it.

Without such a Faith and such Affections as these, all our Religious performances will be but as so many empty Insignificant formalities; which though repeated to Eternity would be as far from bringing down the Blessed healing Influences of Jesus upon our Souls, as a Mans bare
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viewing, and handling, and talking of the Virtues of an excellent Medicine, would be from curing his distemper'd Body.

But this poor Woman, who had thus *stoln* a Cure as she thought, and was retir'd a little into the Crowd to avoid Discovery; as privately as she carry'd the matter, could not be conceal'd from the All-seeing Jesus. And, as he who sees the inmost desires of a Pious breast, and never sends the most secret *Prayer of Faith* away without a Blessing; as he knew what she had done, and what of his Mercy she had received, and that such Virtue was gone out of him as had amply rewarded her Faith: So designing to improve what had pass'd to other excellent Purposes, He turn'd him about in the Preefs, and said, *Who touched me?* An odd question the Disciples thought, to be ask'd by one who was in the midst of a Crowd, and throng'd on every side, and they said unto him, *thou seest the Multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?* But the Woman knew his meaning, and seeing him looking round about for her, she came fearing and trembling, least he should be angry at her boldness in Presuming thus to touch him, Polluted as she was, and

and take that Blessing away from her again which she thus got by Stealth; and falling down before him, as to a Person of Divine Power and Knowledge, in the hearing of those that were about him, *She told him all the Truth, for what Cause* Luk. 8. 47. *she had Touched him, and how she was Healed immediately.* And by this means, this great Miracle was made Publick, to the confirming both of the womans Faith and Cure; for *Jesus said unto her, Daughter, be of good Comfort, thy Faith hath made thee whole, go in Peace and be whole of thy Plague.* And also to the strengthening the Faith of those that heard so wonderful a relation from the Partys own mouth, particularly that of *Jairus*, which (as we shall see Presently) soon after met with a more than ordinary Tryal.

But in the meantime from this last Passage of the Womans forcing her Modesty thus openly to give an account of her unclean Disease, and the manner of her Cure; we may learn, that when through the mercies of Jesus, and the influences of his blessed Spirit, the unclean Diseases of our Souls are Cured, We should not be ashamed to make a free and open Confession of our former Vile, Polluted, miserable State, and declare the happy change

that we now find by the Grace and Goodness of God, when it may be conducive to his Glory and our Brothers benefit.

And indeed, such frank Ingenuous acknowledgments, from the Person himself, whose Conscience was once wasted by a continual Course of Wickedness for many Years, and such assurances from his own experience, of the Blessed alteration which unfeigned Repentance, and true Piety make in the whole Man, must needs do great service to Religion; and very Probably will be more Prevalent with a Sinner to his Reformation, than the most affectionate Discourses of those, who are look'd upon as Men of design that Preach for Bread, and load Men with unnecessary Burthens. But when a Person that is disinterest'd, and who once was of the same mind with those that *make a mock at Sin*, and as far gone as any in wicked vicious Practices; when such a one shall become a *Preacher of Righteousness*, and Detest and Abhor his former Pollutions, and say how Miserable he was then, and how Happy now; this in all likelihood will touch a lewd Wretch close, and make him consider and look about him, and be the beginning of his Conversion. But whether it succeeds so well or no, 'twill be

be very acceptable to God, and much to the reputation of Religion, and mightily confirm and fix, those that are already engag'd in a Life of Holiness and Vertue.

When thou art Converted therefore, as our Lord said to Peter, *Strengthen thy Brethren*; when thou art Heal'd, sound forth the Praises of thy great Physician; let it be known what wondrous things thy Jesus hath done for thee; who of a Despicable, Foul, and Loathsome Creature, a torment to thy self while upon Earth, and just a sinking into the miseries of eternal Death, hath made thee Sound, and Clean, and Vigorous, a comfort to thy self and all about thee, and like to Live for ever in the *Inheritance of the Saints in Light.*

And no Man need be ashamed of what is indeed his Glory, that is, to say of himself as the Apostle did of the *Corinthians*, thus and thus was I Polluted once, *but I am Wash'd, but I am Sanctified, but I am Justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of my God.*

Now as our Saviour was talking to this Woman, there came a Messenger from the Ruler of the *Synagogue's* House, which brought him the Melancholy news of his

Ver. 35. Childs Death, and told him 'twas needless to trouble Jesus any further.

We may Imagine how great a damp this was to the tender Father, in the midst of his hopes and even assurance of his Daughters doing well, for Jesus was going to heal her, and the man was fully Perswaded that he was able to do it even at the last extremity, and therefore look'd upon it as good as done already; and had she breath'd a little longer till this great Prophet had laid his hands upon her she would have been out of Danger: But so unfortunate to him was the Cure of the poor Woman we but now mention'd, that the stop she gave to Jesus, was the unhappy occasion of his losing this his only Child.

While the afflicted Man was under this sad surprize, and ready to take his leave of our Lord, and, Proceed with a heavy heart to his mournful House, (for Jesus having not as yet Restored any to Life that had been Dead, we may believe the Ruler did not think his Power could reach so far) he who is Lord of Life and
 Jqh. 5. 21. Death and quickneth whom he will, took Pity on him and put him in heart again, and said unto him, *be not afraid, only Believe.* As if he had said, fear nothing as long

long as I am with thee ; notwithstanding what is told thee of thy Daughters death, I'll still go home with thee, and do thou but firmly confide in my Power, as thou hast reason to do from what hath pass'd even now, and leave the rest to me.

These Blessed words, *be not afraid*, &c. Mar. 1.22. and which no doubt were spoken with that usual *Majesty* and *Authority* which Joh. 7.46. accompany'd all that our great Master said ; must needs give fresh encouragement to *Jairus*, and make him even *against* Rom.4.18. *hope Believe in Hope*. For who can fear when *Jesus* cheers him up ? Who can doubt when *Jesus* says *Believe*, with whom all things are Possible, and the most desperate Cases not beyond his help ? And therefore as *whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our Learning*, that we through *Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures* might have hope ; so would we but reflect in our Troubles and Dejections upon these gracious Words of our Saviour, *Be not afraid, only Believe*, and look upon them as spoken to our selves by him *who changeth not, but is the same Yesterday and to Day and for ever*, and apply them home by thorough serious Meditation : We should find them the most reviving Cordial in the World.

For what Supports, what Comforts, what Deliverances may we not hope for, from our Almighty and most merciful Redeemer?

Let us but believe him as mindful and desirous of our Happiness as ever, as much touch'd with our Misfortunes and as able to remove them, and with entire Affiance in his disposals Repose our *All* into his Hands, and wait the event with due Patience and Resignation; and then, be our Affairs never so Intricate and Hopeless, we shall find that all things will be order'd to our full satisfaction at last.

Now when Jesus was come to the Rulers House, he suffer'd none to follow him in but *Peter* and *James* and *John*; *Verf. 37.* Probably that he might avoid the Imputation of Popularity and vain Glory, and yet have witness sufficient of what he Intended to do; which should teach us to manage even our best Actions with Prudence, and so as to give as little occasion for Censure as is Possible. And when he saw the bustle that was made in order to the Funeral, and heard the Weeping and Wailing of the Family, and those that according to the custom were hir'd to make Lamentation, and Play mournful tunes upon certain Instruments of Musick, to move Peoples

Peoples affections the more upon such sad occasions; he said unto them, *Why make ye this ado and Weep? The damsel is not Dead but Sleepeth.*

This, to those that saw her die, and had laid her out, and prepared her for Burial, sounded so very strangely that *they Laughed him to Scorn*; taking his Words in the *Common* Literal Sense of them, and not Penetrating deeper into that which Jesus spoke them in.

But the Father of the Maiden, in whom our Lord had raised an expectation of his Restoring her to Life again, we may suppose understood them right; that is, so as to signify her not being irrecoverably Dead to *him*, though she was so to all the World beside, but only as in a Sound Dead Sleep as we call it, from which his Touch and Call should presently Awake her: According to that Mystical way of Speaking which was usual with the Prophets of Old, and with our Saviour too, as is evident from his Parables, &c.

And thus People very often Ridicule what they do not understand; and very much betray their Ignorance and Folly when they think they shew their Wit. Thus Religion it self becomes the matter of a laugh to some that are very Wise in their

their own Conceit, because of some things in it which they can't give account of and fully comprehend; as if *their* understanding were the measure of all Truth, and whatever appears unintelligible and impossible to them, must needs be so in it self.

How Immodest, and truly Ridiculous this is, any Man of Sense may judge; and he is very Ill-grounded in his Faith and of a Pitiful Unmanly Spirit too, who dares not Believe and Act like a Christian, for fear of being Flouted at and Derided by a few Prophane, Opinionated Silly Wretches, who are indeed the Shame and scandal of their kind. Rather, let us do as our Great Master here did, and proceed steadily in our Holy Purposes, and adhere to the Faith with Resolution and Courage, notwithstanding the Jeers and Reproaches of a Wicked Generation.

And as he put them all out except the Father and Mother of the Damsel, and his three Disciples mentioned before, such Scorners not being worthy to see the Miracle he designed to work: So all good Men should shun the Conversation of the Lewd Infidel Tribe, that being thus abandon'd by the best of Mankind, *they may be ashamed*, and brought to better thoughts and wiser counsels. And let every Man take

take notice, who Mocks at Religion upon any account whatsoever; that the time will come when with bitter Cries and Tears he will seek to enter into the once despised Kingdom of Jesus, and shall not be able. Luk. 13. 24.

And then, when the kind invitations of the Gospel to Happiness and Glory, shall be changed into *Depart ye Cursed into Everlasting Fire*, and the Door of Heaven for ever shut upon him, and God shall laugh at his Calamity and mock when his Fear cometh; what weeping and howling and gnashing of teeth through the extremity of his Torment, will then become his Dismal Portion for ever! Matt. 41. 25. — Pro. 1.26.

Now when Jesus was entred in where the Dead Child was lying, he took her by the hand, and said unto her, *Damsel I say unto thee arise, and straightway her Spirit came again and she arose and walked.*

How Sovereign was thy Touch, Blessed Redeemer! It cleans'd even the Lepers, gave sight to the Blind, open'd the Ears of the Deaf, made the Dumb to speak, and raised the Dead! So touch our Blind, Polluted and Deaf hearts, and which are even dead to all things that are good, that we may be cleans'd from all our Sins, see our true Interest, hear and obey thy gracious Voice, and arise to newness of Life,

Life, and then do thou open our Lips that our Mouth may shew forth thy Praise!

As soon as the Parents of the child saw that she was alive again, *they were astonished with a great astonishment*, and fill'd with Joy and Wonder. But Jesus to avoid the as yet unseasonable applauses of the People, and that he might not too much Provoke the Envy and Malice of the Jewish Rulers, his time of suffering being not yet come, *charg'd them straitly that no Man should know it*; that is, he earnestly desir'd them to make no noise of what had been done, but keep it as Private as was Possible, (for a thing of that nature could not, nor did he desire it should be *wholly Conceal'd*) and then, further to convince them that she was really as much alive as ever, *he commanded that something should be given her to Eat*; and which was but needful likewise to recruit her Spirits, which were so much wasted by her Sicknefs and the Agonies of Death, and could not be otherwise kept up but by a second Miracle. Whereas our Lord in all the wondrous recoveries he wrought, after he had made nature sound and whole, and put it once again into a state of Health, then left it to the usual methods of support.

And

And thus, when by the inward touches of his Life-giving Spirit and the Powerful calls of his Word, Jesus in Mercy awakens any of us from the Dead sleep of Sin, to a Lively feeling Sense of Heavenly things, whereby we become alive to Religion, and have a sensible relish for it as our chief Good; he then expects that we should do our Part to Preserve that Spiritual Life by proper Nourishment; that we may thoroughly revive to Righteousness, walking in the way of Gods commandments, and growing in ^{2 Pet. 3. 18.} Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And indeed so strangely numb and chill are we apt to be to Religious objects, and so wholly taken up with those of sense, and so constant are the endeavours of our great Enemy by various arts to stifle every good thought as soon as it arises, and quench every the least spark of Devotion that begins to glow within us; that 'tis highly necessary to stir up the gift of God ^{2 Tim. 1. 6.} that is in us, as St. Paul adviseth Timothy, or as the original Imports, continually recruit and fan our languid dying Flames as we would a Fire that is going out. And as our sensitive appetite puts us upon procuring what is grateful to the Body

dy and needful to its maintenance, and where there is no such Appetite nature soon decays, and therefore we do all we can to Strengthen and Increase it when it begins to fail; so must we endeavour to excite and quicken such Religious desires in our Souls as may prompt us with Pleasure to seek after the Food of the Heavenly Life, and suck it in with as keen an appetite and savoury goust as may be.

This our Saviour calls Hungring and Thirsting after Righteousness, and David expresses by delighting in God and in his Law, when it becomes sweeter than Honey to ones Mouth, and we begin to taste how Gracious the Lord is, who hath call'd us from Darkness into his marvellous Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God.

Matt. 5. 6.
Psa. 37. 4.
Psa. 119.
103.
Psa. 34. 8.
1 Pet. 2. 9.
Acts 26. 18.

He therefore that would be effectually rais'd from the Death of Sin, to a New and Holy Life, so as to thrive and grow Vigorous in it, must by no means neglect daily to Inspirite it more and more, by such methods as our Holy Religion directs to; for otherwise 'twill soon grow languid and unactive, like the Life of a Body stupid with the numb Palsy, just next door to no Life at all, or at best no more than what we call an enlivening before Death, a suddain flash of a Dying flame,

the

the last effort of a perishing, expiring Soul.

More especially we should be careful to maintain a frequent Conversation with Heaven, by Meditation and Prayer, and the fervent aspirations of Holy Love. This will refine our Affections, and take them off from the World and fix them upon their Proper and only satisfying Objects, and will be to the Soul what the animal Spirits are to the Body, the main spring of Action, and that which will enable us with Vivacity and a natural Readiness and grateful Sensation to Perform the functions of the Spiritual Life.

And indeed, Devotion and Love are the very Life and Soul of Christianity, and all the Religious Postures we put ourselves into, are but meer Mechanism without them like the motions of a Lifeless Statue which are caus'd by Art, the Figure all the while remaining as Insensible as ever, for want of a vital Principle within.

And as the very *Obstruction* of the animal Spirits in the Body though but for a while, causes in it strange Numbness and Stupidity; so the Soul without Love and Devotion grows Cold and Sluggish and Unactive, and as they decay, Religion
pines

pires away proportionably, and all expire together.

And since the Life of the Soul through all the Periods of it, its first Beginnings and future Improvements, and glorious Consummation is intirely owing to that divine Spirit in whom in every sence we *Live and move and have our Being*; we must be exceeding careful to observe and comply with all his Blessed Actings upon our minds, and when he instills, (as he often does we know not how) good Notices and pious Thoughts into them, moves us to form such and such Holy Resolutions, and excites us to put them in Practice, reminds us of our Duty, forwarns us of our Dangers, awakens our Consciences, reproves our Faults, encourages our Vertue, and the like; to all such Impressions of his, which we at any time experience, we must be yielding and compliant as Wax is to the Seal, and that cheerfully and with a thankful Alacrity, lest by our stubbornness and hardned Obstinacy we grieve and force from us that Life giving

Eph. 4.36. *Power whereby we are seal'd to the Day of Redemption.* For although God hath to our unspeakable Comfort declar'd, (and Blessed be his Goodness for ever!) That he *desireth not the Death of a Sinner, but rather*

rather that he should turn from his Wickedness and Live, and hath afforded such effectual means of Recovery that none can Destroy us but our selves; yet there may be through an Irreclaimable Course of Wickedness so great an Indisposition and Unfitness in the Soul for vital Union with the Holy Spirit of God, as utterly to drive him out, and then though Destruction must follow, *and that without Remedy*, yet the blame must be wholly our own.

To this we must add, a Serious, Affectionate, and constant Attendance as we have Opportunity upon the distribution of that Bread of Life, which we receive in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

This is the noble nourishment of the Souls of Christians, and the staff of our Heavenly Life; and those that have experienc'd it can tell, that nothing makes Religion more sensibly Delightful, nor conduces more to the Health and Vigour of the inner Man: And 'tis so necessary, where it may be had, that Christ himself hath said, we have *no Life in us* without *Joh, 6. 53;* it. 'Tis the great conveyance of the Grace of God, assures us of his Favour, unites us to the Son of his Love, and is an earnest of our Eternal enjoyment of
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§8. — him in his Glorious Kingdom; for he that with due Appetite and suitable Affections *Eateth of this Bread shall Live for ever.*

And when at any time we find our spiritual Appetite grow weak and sickly and irregular, and we begin to nauseate the substantial food of Righteousness and true Holiness, and hanker after filth and trash, and can relish nothing but sensual enjoyments; as 'tis an evident sign that there's a secret Disease lurking within, and which will prove mortal if not check'd in time, so nothing more Proper to *Rectifie* that false and vitiated Appetite, and recover those Religious relishes again which we had lost, than often to Partake of that Celestial Manna, and Drink of that Invigorating Cup, which will diffuse new Spirits throughout our half dead Souls, and create in us afresh such a love and liking to the things of God, as will make our Hunger and Longings after them as Importunate as ever. But with all we must remember, that even this Divine restorative will not be effectual unless we do what in us lies to contribute towards its kindly operation; we must take it with sincere though weak desires of receiving benefit by it, and humbly Pray
to

to Jesus for his Blessing, and resolve to abstain from what our great Physician hath told us will hinder its taking due effect. And then, though not Immediately and all at once, which must not be expected, yet by degrees we shall perceive the Blessed alteration, and enjoy the Pleasures of a confirmed Spiritual Health.

And to secure all, we must go on in this good Course with a persevering steadiness, to the last moment of our Lives. The food of our Souls must be as constantly and regularly taken as that of our Bodies, or else they will soon be famish'd; and we may neglect Holy duties so long till our Appetite for Religion is gone before we are aware, and Sin gets strength a pace, and the divine Life faints and dies away, and all our hopeful beginnings come to nothing. And no Relapse so dangerous as that of him, who having been once raised by the great goodness of God from a State of Spiritual Death, willfully sinks himself again into it. It must be something beyond the ordinary methods of Grace that can quicken a Soul *twice Dead* in Wickedness; but where's Jude 19. the least encouragement to hope for such a Miracle? We have rather all the reason in the World to fear, that this second

Death of the Soul in *Trespases and Sins* here in this World, is but too certain a forerunner of that other *second Death* in the extremest Misery and Torment which
Rev. 21. 8. shall be for ever in Hell; *when Men shall*
Rev. 9. 6. seek that which is *Death* indeed, and shall not find it, and shall desire to Die and Death shall flee from them.

It becomes us all therefore, according to St. Paul's excellent advice, to walk *circumspectly* in this great Affair, *not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.* And what folly can be greater than to court Damnation and shun Eternal Life! One would think much thought and circumspection should not be needful, to keep us from such strange unnatural choices as these. But so it is, and without extraordinary care so it will be still; so blind are we to our best Interest, Stupid and Dead when we should be vigorously Pursuing it, and alive to nothing but what belongs to the World and to Sense. However, 'tis not yet too late, there is such a thing as *Redeeming the time*; as yet we may arise and Live, and we are often call'd upon to do so by him who earnestly desires our Happiness, and will assist our first faint efforts, strengthen our weak endeavours, and bring them to Perfection.

Now

Now 'tis the voice of a friend that cries to us *Arise*, and he gives us his Blessed hand too, to lift us up; but if we still remain insensible and cold and stiff notwithstanding all his applications to revive us, those whom his small still voice could not awake, the Angels trumpet shall; And then the mild affectionate perswasives of a Saviour will be changed into the peremptory Summons of an angry Judge.

H 3

The

The Fifth Miracle.

*A Cripple Cur'd at the Pool of
Bethesda, who had been
so Thirty Eight Years.*

J O H. V. I, &c.

*After this there was a Feast of the Jews, and
Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there
is at Jerusalem by the Sheep Market a
Pool which is call'd in the Hebrew tongue
Bethesda, having five Porches, &c.*

CONCERNING this Pool of Bethesda and the Medicinal Virtue of it, to those who should first step into it after the Water was troubled by an Angel; there is variety of Opinions. Some, from the silence of the Old Testament about a thing so very remarkable, Conclude that these Waters had their healing Property but a little before the coming of our Saviour; and look upon this Pool as a Miraculous præfiguration and fore-runner of his

his All-healing purifying Blood : That Divine *Fountain*, which the Prophet *Zachary* says should *in that Day be opened to the* Zach. 13. 1. *House of David, and to the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, for Sin and for Uncleanness.* And the *Angel* that is said to *Trouble the Waters*, and put them into a kind of Ferment or Commotion, they suppose to be a Heavenly Spirit sent by God for that Purpose ; that the Infirm and Sick might know by that sign when they should step in. Not that they think the Angel was visible, but that the sudden bubbling up of the Water at such and such certain Seasons, inclin'd the *Jews* to believe that 'twas effected by the Ministry of an Angel ; to which they usually ascrib'd what ever was extraordinary, and otherwise unaccountable. And the apartments that were built about this Pool for the more convenient Reception of the Diseased, who flocked thither in great numbers after the virtue of the Waters was well known and experienc'd, were from the great Cures wrought there call'd *Bethesda*, that is, *the House of Mercy*.

Others, Resolve all this into natural Causes, and will allow no Miracle to be in it, supposing the virtue of those Waters to be deriv'd from the Blood and Fat

that was wash'd off from the warm Entrails and Carcases of the Beasts that were kill'd for Sacrifice; (that Pool being just by the Temple and put to such uses) many Thousands of which were slain at the Feast of the Pasover (which was the time mentioned in the Gospel) and might probably impregnate the Pit or little Pool they were wash'd in with such a medicinal Quality, like that of Baths or the warm Skins of Beasts newly taken off) as would Cure diseases Proceeding from Obstructions of the Animal Spirits, such as Palsies, and Lameness caus'd by the numbness of the Parts, and it may be some sorts of Blindness too; (which are the Diseases specifi'd and referr'd to v. 4.) provided the Patient immediately step'd in after the grosser Parts of congeal'd Blood, &c. were rais'd from the bottom, (that they might infuse themselves more strongly into the Water,) before they subsided again. And as for the *Angel* that is said to stir the Water, they suppose it should be understood only of an Officer, or Messenger, (as the Word in *Greek* signifies, and for which they quote, *Act.* 12. 8.) who was employed for that Purpose.

Which

Which of these Opinions is the truest, I leave the Reader to determine, our Saviours Miracle being not at all concern'd in the Dispute, but I thought it might not be amiss just to mention what Learned Men think of this famous Pool, and that not without some Probability even on the weaker side.

Now a certain man was there which had an Infirmary Thirty and Eight Years, and when Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been a long time in that Case, he saith unto him, wilt thou be made whole?

The long continuance of this Poor Mans Lameness, and his helpless friendless Condition, *who had no Man when the Water was Troubled to put him into the Pool,* and whose Infirmary made him so slow in coming himself that his hopes were always disappointed, and another step'd down before him; all this put together, made his Case so truly Pitiabie that the most Compassionate Jesus who is indeed *the helper of the Friendless,* took notice of him with great Commiseration.

And this may teach us, that the long duration of our Troubles, and seemingly most Forlorn Condition, and frequent disappointments in our endeavours to put an end to them; should by no means sink
us

us into a distrust of God's kind Care and Providence, nor tempt us to think we are abandon'd by him, because others succeed better than we do and get out of their Afflictions before us, and leave us still sighing under our misfortunes as those that have no helper. For if we bear the burden God lays upon us with Patience and due Temper, and wait his leisure with humble resignation to his Blessed Will; we shall find that all the Melancholy Scenes will wind up at last in a happy conclusion, and joy surprize us when we least expect it.

Little did this Poor Creature think a Cure was so nigh, when Jesus asked him, *wilt thou be made whole?* We may suppose rather, that his thoughts were taken up with sad Reflections, bemoaning his hard Fortune, that tho' so near that Healing Pool, from whence he saw so many go away rejoicing, he still was left there lying without help, and like to do so for ought that he could see, for ever.

For he makes no direct Answer to our Saviour's Question, who he thought might take it for granted, that one in his Deplorable Condition would be overjoyed at a Cure; but abruptly tells him what was his great misfortune (*viz.*) that he
had

had no Friend to assist him to go down into the Pool, and when he was crawling towards it by his own Feeble Strength, he was always prevented by some body or other stepping in before him, thereby tacitly begging his Charitable Assistance, and which probably was all that he expected from him, Jesus being then a perfect v. 13. Stranger to him.

But see how ready our Blessed Master is to succour the miserable, those especially that are under the greatest Necessities and Dejections, and how able to chase away even the most Chronical Calamity in an instant! *Jesus said unto him, rise, take up thy Bed and walk; and immediately the Man was made whole, and did so.*

And can we think his Pity or his Power, is less now than it was then? Oh no! He now has a more Compassionate feeling of our Infirmities than ever, and is Heb. 14. still, if possible, more ready and as able 15. to prevent us with the Blessings of his Goodness. Psal. 21.3. We are now the Purchase of his most Precious Blood which he hath actually shed for our Redemption; he is our Head, and we are his Members; and therefore we may be assured, he hath a Heb. 4. most intimate sense of our Troubles and 15. tender Concern for our Happiness, and will

will not suffer us to be afflicted beyond what he knows is requisite to our best interest, *that the tryal of our Faith may be found unto Praise and Honour and Glory, and may yield us the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness, after we have been sufficiently exercised thereby.*

1 Pet. 1. 7.
Heb. 12.
11.

Wherefore, let no good Christian be discouraged tho' the Years of his Affliction are many, and Time, which puts an end to other Peoples Sufferings, or makes them lighter at least, seems only to add length and weight to his; but hope in him, who brought a Cure both unexpected and unasked for, to a meer stranger, who had been a helpless Cripple for Eight and Thirty Years.

The longer we have been tried, the nearer does approach the happy time of recompence; perhaps in this World, but most certainly in one infinitely better. And then, how light will even our heaviest Afflictions seem, and how like a moment their longest duration, when we shall look back upon them from a Blissful Eternity. And let us by no means in our distresses, limit providence to such and such *methods* of Relief, and think ourselves undone if they can't be had, or prove unsuccessful: For as the Poor Man here, who had so set his Heart upon the

2 Cor. 4.
17.

Pool

Pool of *Bethesda*, that all his hopes of recovery were concentrated there, and he despaired of ever being Well till he had Bathed his Limbs in those Healing Waters; had them restored to their full Strength without them, and in the midst of his disappointments of what he thought the only means of Cure, was made perfectly whole he knew not how: So we, if in a full reliance upon God's All-Wise and Powerful Goodness, we humbly commit our selves to his disposal, that when and how he pleaseth he would put an end to our Afflictions, shall upon the whole be abundantly satisfied in Gods Mercy towards us, though his Thoughts were not as our Thoughts, and his Ways widely differ'd from ours.

And how amazed, may we imagine, was this Lame Creature, who for so long a time had been confined to Crutches, and which he was hardly able to make use of, to find himself on the sudden strong enough to arise from the Bed whereon he was forced to lye, and to walk with it upon his Shoulders, and all this at the bare word of a Stranger! It must needs, one would think, make him doubtful at first, whether 'twas a Reality, or only a Pleasant Dream; but when the Vigour
he

he found in every Part, and the ease and freedom of his Motion, had convinc'd him that it was no Delusion, but a thorough Cure; how full of Joy was he! And what a mixture of Love and Veneration may we suppose was in his Breast, towards that admirable Person who had spoke him whole!

No wonder that he so readily obeyed his Command of carrying his Bed to his House, though it was the *Sabbath-Day*, and ventur'd the displeasure of the *Jews* by doing so; and when they found fault with him for it, thought it excuse enough to say, *he that made me whole, said, take up thy Bed and walk.* For he might well conclude, that he who could with a Word restore his Limbs to him who had been a Cripple almost *Forty Years*, had sufficient Authority to bid him carry so joyful a burthen, though it was on the Day of Rest.

V. II.

And indeed, nothing less than Almighty Power could Work such a Miracle as this; which one would think should have convinced all Men, even the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* themselves, that the Author of it was that Divine Prophet who was then expected. But so great was their Superstition, their Envy, and their Malice, that

that they made a mighty outcry upon it, and enquired who it was that dared to command him to violate the Sabbath, and when they knew that it was Jesus *they Persecuted him and sought to slay him, because he had done those things on the Sabbath-Day.* V. 16.

But our Lord's design in this and several other like instances, which we meet with in his life, was by no means to lessen the Veneration that was due to the Sabbath, but only to bring the People off from those unreasonable and even ridiculous superstitions, which their Doctors had brought in relating to it, and to make way for that change which should in a little time be made of the Seventh for the First Day of the Week; on which a far greater Blessing should be commemorated, than was ever bestowed upon the World before.

The Sabbath was made for Man, said, our Lord when he reasoned with the Pharisees upon this Argument; 'twas instituted for his Good and Benefit, that he might rest from his Labours and have leisure to Meditate upon the great Goodness of his Creator to him, and Praise him for those many and wonderful Mercies which he hath heaped upon him.
But

Mark 2. 27. But *Man was not made for the Sabbath*, to be tyed unto such a Dronish Inhumane kind of Rest, that it should not be permitted him to do any good Offices to himself or others on it, for fear he should Prophanize it.

This was never the Intention of the Infinitely Wise and Good Lawgiver; no doubt therefore, as he concluded, but 'twas
 Matt. 12. *Lawful to do Good on the Sabbath-Day.*
 12. And he appealed to their own Practice
 Luke 13. too of Relieving any Beast in Distress,
 15, 16. and Watering their Cattel, &c. and then
 14. 5. inferred unanswerably *how much is a Man better than a Beast!* And accordingly we may observe that our Lord wrought more Miracles upon the Sabbath than any Day besides, as the most proper time for Works of Mercy.

And if so, no question but 'tis Lawful to do Works of Charity and Necessity upon the Christian Lord's Day too; and therefore, he that makes it his Business to spend that Holy Day in the Offices of Religion Publick and Private, and abstains from Secular Employments, and Disengages his Mind from the Vanities and Disturbances of the World, that he may with greater freedom contemplate Heavenly things; need not perplex himself

himself with nice scruples concerning a strict *Bodily Rest*. For that would be to turn it into a Jewish *Sabbath* (the very name of which is misapply'd to it, and has been the occasion of some well meaning Peoples mistakes about the manner of observing it) and *again to intangle our selves with Part of that yoke of Bondage, from which Christ hath set us free.*

Leave we now for a while our recover'd Cripple, rejoycing in his Burthen, though amidst the threats and clamours of the *Jewish* Rulers; and from that strengthening Power which attended the command of Jesus, and gave this Infirm weak Creature ability to do what but a little before seem'd utterly Impossible, we may derive encouragement readily and chearfully to set about the Performance of the most difficult Duties of our Holy Religion; since if we do so, he that Commands them, can and will make us able to Obey.

Let it be granted, that Laps'd Humane Nature is extremely Weak and Impotent to what is Good, and strangely Prone to every thing that is Evil; that we are surrounded with the Objects of Sense which strike home upon us, and are mighty agreeable to our bodily Appetites, and

made still more enticing, by the workings of our Fancy and Imagination; let it be own'd too, that our great Enemy the subtle Tempter disposes favourable opportunities for the gratifying our Inordinate desires, and puts ill People upon Solliciting and Alluring us to make use of them, and thereby inflames our Passions to a perfect Rebellion, which at best are but too resty and ungovernable; let it be granted, that we have been so long in this Condition that 'tis become Habitual and a second Nature, and that spiritual Objects, though infinitely more excellent, are yet at so great a distance, and of so different a nature from what we constantly Converse with, that they affect us very coolly if at all; and that so much attention of mind and abstraction from the World is requisite to bring them near to us, and make us feel their Influences to that degree, as to delight in them more than the gratifications of Sense, that Flesh and Blood while under circumstances so mightily disadvantageous, cannot without much difficulty raise it self so much above the Earth, and grow so like an Angel in Spiritual strength and Purity, as to walk in the steps of Jesus the Righteous, and become Crucify'd

fy'd to the World, its Affections and Lusts, and have its Conversation in Heaven.

Let all this be Granted, and which is nothing more, God knows, than the sad Truth; yet when we consider that 'tis Jesus Commands us thus to *Arise and take up our Burden and Walk*, our most Compassionate Saviour who knows, and feels, and pities our Infirmities, and is not Ignorant whereof we are made, but remembers that we are but sinful Dust; he that so loved us as to lay down his Life in Torments for us, that he might reconcile us to his Heavenly Father, and all whose aim is to secure to us and fit us for a full felicity in his own Glorious and Eternal Kingdom: when we thus reflect we cannot but Conclude, that as he would not have laid such Commands upon us as he has done, and that under the penalty of Eternal misery upon our Disobedience, were it not absolutely necessary to our Happiness; so whatever he Commands he will make us able to Perform, and further our sincere though weak endeavours, especially since he knows that we can do nothing without him.

And indeed, nothing can be more unreasonable and ungrateful too, than to say that any thing which Christ hath made

Mat. 11.
30.

1 Joh. 5.3.

Phil. 4.13.

our Duty is Impracticable. He who best knows the nature of his own Precepts, and is better acquainted with our Abilities than we our selves are, has expressly told us that his *Yoke is easy and his Burthen light*; and that not only in comparison with the Yoke of *Moses* and the Bondage of Sin, and the intolerable load of Guilt; but in it self as being our most *reasonable Service*. And he hath likewise given us the powerful aids of his Grace, and Holy Spirit which are never wanting to those that will make use of them; so that we must acknowledge with *St. John*, that his *Commandments are far from Grievous*, and with *St. Paul*, that *we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us*.

'Tis true, as was said, we may and do find some difficulty in Paying obedience to the Christian Law; but that's no just reflection upon the Law, only it shews how corrupt and vile our sinful Nature is, whose long continued vicious habits have brought us to this shameful Impotency to all things that are Good.

Thus, when a Man through his Debauchery has made himself a helpless Cripple, and utterly unable to do the usual Business of his Calling; I hope the blame

blame must not be laid upon the Calling, as if that were so intolerably Laborious that there was no enduring it: For should he become Sound again and regain his former Strength, all the Difficulty would presently vanish, and he'd Perform his business with as much ease as ever. And yet, no alteration in the Business which continues just as it was before; only the Man has recover'd the use of those Powers, which God at first gave him, and he had unnaturally depriv'd himself of by his Lewdness.

Just thus it is relating to the hardships we complain of in Religion: and though 'tis but too true, that we are so far gone in this our Spiritual impotency that of our selves we must continue in it for ever, yet when once our sluggish, stupid Souls shall be so far rous'd and excited by the grace of God, as to engage in an honest hearty endeavour to regain what we have lost; as by degrees we shall find a renewal of our strength, so likewise shall we find, that the burdens of Religion, (as we call them,) will sit lighter and lighter upon us, till at length, what we once accounted an Intolerable slavery will become our great delight, and we shall esteem it as the most valuable and Perfect freedom.

And this divine Reviving grace, as it is never denyed to those who humbly beg it, so through the Infinite Goodness of God, it prevents our very Prayers; he first excites in our Souls a desire of his favour and assistance, and then graciously confers it on us.

As here, when Jesus looked upon the poor lame Man with Pity, and kindly ask'd him *wilt thou be made whole*? It was to wind him up to a due pitch of Faith and Hope and Desire, that he might be prepar'd and qualify'd for the mercy he design'd him, who otherwise would have lost that happy opportunity; and then he commands him to *arise and walk*. So that, will we but comply with the Invigorating influences of the Holy Spirit on our Souls, and be indeed desirous to recover our lost strength, and do our best to help our selves; there will be nothing wanting on our Saviours part to enable us to bear all the burdens which he lays upon us, and to pay him an acceptable Obedience.

We may close this Observation therefore with that known ejaculation of St. Austin, *Enable us to obey, O Lord, and then command what thou pleasest!*

As soon as Jesus had thus Miraculously restor'd this Cripple to his Limbs, we read that *he convey'd himself away*. So far we see was our Lord from being popular and desirous of being admir'd and cry'd up, for any good he did, that he withdrew himself from those just Praises which such an action as this deserv'd. And thus was his practice exactly agreeable to his Doctrine, when he bids us *not to do our alms before men to be seen of them*, not to blazon our good Deeds, and make them as publick and observeable as we can *that we may have glory of Men*; but to be as secret in them as is possible, that even *our left hand may not know what our right hand doth*. Matt. 6:

For though *he* was infinitely above being led by selfish Interests and blown up into vain glory, yet *we*, he knew, are not; and therefore to secure us from what would pollute our Charity and deprive us of the reward of it, he hath given us such a Precept and example as are too plain to be evaded or misunderstood.

Not that it is unlawful for some Persons upon extraordinary Occasions, to *let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good Works*, and to be the more liberal when they know that 'twill be Mar. 5.16,

taken notice of, For Men in publick place, whom Providence hath set as *a City upon a hill*, upon whom many eyes are fix'd, and whose example is so leading that others will do more or less proportionably, as they see them do before them; not only *may*, but are *oblig'd* to have regard to publick observation in their works of Mercy, and to open their hand the wider for Peoples looking on. For this is to encourage the good Work, and even a very little exceeding in the measures of some mens charity, so great is the power of example, may prove of vast advantage to the Poor in the conclusion. And indeed, 'tis one of the greatest Happineffes of a condition of eminency and note, that it enables a Man at his own moderate expence to do a World of good; and by sowing a little more plentifully than ordinary himself, to procure an increase of an hundred fold to any Charitable or Pious use.

But then, great care must be taken, that all our aim in such open Charities, be the *Glory of our Father which is in Heaven*, the benefit of the Poor and Needy, and the publick Good; for if a vain-glorious desire of Praise from Men, be in the least a motive to them, 'twill turn the
sweet

sweet favour of Works of Piety and Mercy, into the hateful stench that proceeds from Hypocrisie and Pride.

This was the fault which our Lord so sharply reprov'd in the *Pharisees*, who made Loud Proclamation of their alms-deeds, sounded a Trumpet to call the Poor to the distribution of them, and which was done in places of the greatest concourse; but all this was in order to their being extoll'd by the People, as he who knew their inmost thoughts has told *Matt. 6.* us.

But the Good Christian, though he sometimes, and in some circumstances, lets his Charity be seen, (which for the most part should be done in secret, and purely upon the score of Pity and Compassion) yet 'tis for widely different purposes; *viz.* To the greater Glory of him who is the Chief Benefactor, and whose Royal Bounty 'tis that is distributed, and that others may be inclined by so lovely an example to a faithful discharge of their own Trust and Stewardship, that still more and more occasion may be given of *abundant Thanksgiving unto God.* *2 Cor. 9. 11, 12.*

But to proceed;
It was not long after the Impotent Man was Cured, probably the same Day,

Day, that Jesus found him in the Temple.

And what better use could he make of his recovered Limbs than to go to that Holy Place, and render his Devoutest Thanks and Praises to the God of Mercy, who had enabled that excellent Person (though who he was as yet he knew not) with a Word to make him perfectly whole.

He could not but be assured that it must be the Power of God though communicated to Man, that thus in an instant wrought so wondrous a Change in his Old Weak Body after so long and great an Infirmary; and therefore hastens to pay his grateful Tribute to him in the Courts of his own House, and Magnify his Goodness in the midst of the great Assembly of his People.

And this may well put us in mind of the too generally neglected Duty of Publick Thanksgiving in the Church after our reception of any signal Mercy. How often do People send to us that they may be remembred in the Prayers of the Congregation when in their distress, and how seldom are we desired to offer up their Thanks and Praises when they are delivered from it, or when any other

other great Blessing is conferred upon them!

The thing is too well known to be doubted, and too bad to be excused; and except it be Womens returning Thanks for Safe-Delivery in Child-Birth, which a very good Custom hath made it Scandalous to omit; (tho' through a very ill and senseless one 'tis too often done in Private) 'tis very rarely that any Publick Praise is given.

Nor is it sufficient to say, they don't forget in their own thoughts and that at Church too, to make a grateful acknowledgement of God's goodness to them; for an extraordinary Mercy requires an extraordinary acknowledgment: And if that Mercy hath been publickly and particularly Pray'd for, 'tis highly fitting and our bounden duty, that the grant of it should be as publickly and particularly owned, with suitable Gratitude and Affection.

For how can the Goodness of our Gracious God be magnified as it should be without openly declaring what great things he hath done for us? And when he hath been pleased to give us what we have asked, to remove our Troubles and Crown us with Joy and Gladness; how are we bound

bound in the most Publick manner to celebrate the Praises of the divine Fountain of our comforts, and thereby encourage all about us to address themselves to that equally powerfull and good being in all their Sorrows, Wants and Dangers, who is the common refuge of the miserable!

Psal. 40.
12, 13.

And indeed, nothing can be more uneasy to one of a truly gratefull Spirit, than to shut up the sense he has of the *loving kindness of the Lord*, within the narrow compass of his Breast; it will soon make its way through his Lips, and with Holy David, *his talking will be of his Truth and his Salvation, and he will not keep it back from the great Congregation.* He will go into God's House with the Sacrifice of Praise, and will pay the Vows which he promised with his Lips when he was in Trouble. He will say, *O come hither and hearken all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my Soul. I cried unto him and he heard me, and considered the voice of my Prayer; praised be God, who hath not cast out my Prayer nor turned his Mercy from me?* Psal. 66. 12, &c.

O go your way therefore into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise, be thankful unto him and speak good of his Name; for the Lord is Gracious, his
Mercy

Mercy is Everlasting and his Truth endureth from Generation to Generation. Psal. 100.

3, 4.

Now when Jesus saw the Man whom he had made whole, so well employ'd in the Temple; he went to him and gave him this excellent advice, *Behold thou art made whole, sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee!*

This supposes, that the Mans former Sins, either by way of Punishment, or by their Natural Tendency, had brought that Infirmary upon him, under which he had so long laboured. Sin is indeed the fruitful Parent of Misery, and brings a numerous train of Calamities upon Mankind; and very often, the extravagancies of a few Years in our Youth, imbitter all our days to come, and make the remainder of our Wretched Life to be no better than a long lingering Death.

And if we may guess at this Cripples Sins, the circumstances of the Story would incline us to think, that they were such as had not only made him Poor, and Lame, and Helpless, but *Lothsome* too; since in so long a time he could prevail with no Body so far to touch him, as to help him down into the Healing Pool of *Bethesda*.

And

And if so, as his Condition was doubly Deplorable, being not only extremely bad in it self, but brought upon him by his own great Wickedness; so our Lord's Charity to him was doubly great, in adding to the Cure of his Body such wholesome spiritual advice, as if he made good use of it, would save his Soul. And nothing could be better tim'd, nor more likely to make a deep and lasting impression. For the Poor Man must needs have very high thoughts of that Holy and Extraordinary Person to whom God had given such Wondrous Power, as with a Word to make *him* perfectly Sound; and his great goodness too, in taking such pity on him though unfought to, when he was shun'd by every Body else, could not but fill his Breast with such intire Love to him, as would make way for all his Counsels to sink down to the very Bottom of his Soul.

Therefore it was that Jesus took that opportunity to say to him, *Behold, thou art made Whole, Sin no more, &c.* As if he had said, "Thou seest thy self by
"God's Compassion to thee, perfectly
"freed from the sad effects, as to this
"World, of thy former Vices; but have
"a care of sliding back into them again,
"or

“or into any other provoking Wicked-
“nesses; lest infinitely greater Misery than
“thou ever yet didst endure, be thy Por-
“tion for ever in Hell.

And thus should we endeavour, so to intermix our Charity both to the Bodies and Souls of our Brethren, as that the former may prepare the way for the better reception of the latter, and the latter never fail to Accompany the former; that what the Blessed Jesus so Wisely Joyn'd together in his Works of Mercy, may never be put asunder in ours.

For as to do Good to the Souls of Men, is without Question a greater Charity than to relieve the Necessities of their Bodies; so no time more seasonable to endeavour it than when Mens Spirits have been humbled and softned by Affliction, and they are brought into an Opinion of our real kindness for them, by our readiness to succour and assist them.

Then those Pious Advices and friendly Reproofs, will be received with a Serious and Affectionate Regard; which in the days of their Prosperity would have blown them up into Passion, and been rejected with Scorn and Contempt. And if by this means we shall have so far
won

won upon any Man, as to have his Ear for the Discourses of Religion, and by making the best use of so fair an Opportunity, recover in him such a feeling Sense of the Necessity of Repentance, and thorough Reformation, as that he sets about it in good earnest; and we see him begin to take delight in his New and Blessed change, and make a Dayly Progress in the Great Work of his Salvation; what unspeakable Satisfaction will it be to us, that God has made us the happy Instruments not only of Succouring a Poor Creature in his Bodily Distresses; *but of saving a Soul from Death, and covering a multitude of sins!* James 5, ult.

Now for a close of this Discourse, let us seriously apply this Advice of our Saviour to our selves, *Behold, thou art made Whole, sin no more, lest a worst thing come unto thee.*

The more we have experienced the Goodness of God in his removal of our Troubles and Afflictions, whether Publick or Private, Rescuing us from Dangers, Raising us up from a Bed of Sickness, Supporting our Spirits under any great Loss or Misfortune and enabling us to bear it even beyond our expectation;

in

in these and the like Cases, let us not be so wholly taken up in rejoycing that we are *made whole*, as to forget our Lords Advice upon it, *Sin no more*, &c.

All this Goodness of God, is designed to win us over to a sincere and hearty Religion, or as St. Paul expresses it, to lead *Rom. 2. 4* us to Repentance; but if it fails of that effect upon us, and we so far despise and slight it as to Continue as bad as ever, or it may be grow worse and worse, Presuming upon the *Riches of his Mercy, Long-Suffering and Forbearance*: Such *Hardness and Impenitency of Heart*, will but treasure up for us still greater degrees of *Wrath against the day of Wrath, and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God*.

For nothing is more provoking than to have ones kindness disregarded and abused; and the more Gracious God hath been to any Sinner, the longer he hath spared him, and the greater favours he hath bestowed upon him, the more will he be incensed against him if they prove not effectual to his Reformation.

And when, in tender care for our happiness, and to awaken us into a sense of our duty and best interest, he has thought fit to exercise us with the Rod of Correction, and then in Mercy laid it aside

K

again

again to see what amendment it hath wrought; if after all he finds nothing but Stubbornness, and Obstinacy, and a continued Impiety, we must expect that he will either take a severer course with us than ever in this World, which yet is the greatest Mercy he can shew us, or else give
 Rom. I. 28. *us over to a Reprobate Mind*, till the Terrible Day of Final Retribution; when he will Banish us from his Divine Presence for ever, *and Deliver us Over to the Tormentors*; put us into the unrelenting hands of those who will not fail to execute his Just Vengeance to the last extremity.

Once more therefore let me remind you of the Caution our dear Redeemer gives us, and which should never be forgotten, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

Amen, Blessed Jesus, Amen!

The Sixth Miracle.

A Man Cured that was Bedrid with the Palsie, and at the Point of Death.

Luke VII. 1, &c.

Jesus entred into Capernaum, and a certain Centurion's Servant who was dear unto him, was sick and ready to die, &c.

WHAT this Sickness of the Centurion's Servant was, St. Matthew tells us, *ch. 8. v. 5, 6.* where he says, that when Jesus entred into Capernaum, there came unto him a Centurion, beseeching him and saying, Lord my Servant lieth at home Sick of the Palsie grievously tormented; and this distemper it seems had been so long upon him, that he was just ready to die of it, and therefore not capable of being brought to Jesus.

This sad Condition of his Servant, whom a long and faithful attendance had very much endeared to him, and for whom, no doubt, he had tried all methods of Cure, he lays before our Lord, of whose Fame 'tis said he had heard; and with revived hopes, humbly begs *his* help who had never failed of Success.

But St. *Matthew* says the Centurion himself *came to Jesus and* besought him; whereas St. *Luke* here tells us that he sent the Elders of the *Jews* to him, and other Friends as to desire his Mercy towards his Servant, so to excuse his not coming in Person to beg it of him, upon account of his unworthiness, being a *Gentile*, to approach so great a Prophet.

Now this seeming inconsistency may easily be removed, by making up the relation of this Miracle out of both the Evangelists, and it will then be this. When the Centurion had first made way for his Address, by such as he might suppose Jesus would receive more favourably than he would a *Roman* Soldier who was a stranger to him, and had desired them to acquaint him with what Character he had amongst them, which would come with more decency from their mouths than his own; upon our Lords being
pleased

pleased to say that he would *come and heal his Servant*, the Centurion's great Modesty and Humility put him upon sending others of his Friends to prevent that trouble, and let Jesus know that he could not deserve or expect so great an Honour; but when for all this, he still kept on his way towards his House, at last he himself came to meet him as he drew near and told him how unworthy he thought himself to receive so great a Guest, and for the same reason did not at first wait on him; and then, with an extraordinary Faith, which our Lord himself admired at, he thus bespoke him, *Lord speak the Word only and my Servant shall be healed. For I also am a Man set under Authority, having Soldiers under me, and I say unto one go and he goeth, and to another come and he cometh, and to my Servant do this and he doeth it.*

Having thus reconciled the Evangelists to each other, the first thing we shall observe in this Miracle is, That this excellent Person who had so tender a concern for his Sick Servant, and behaved himself with so much Modesty and Humility towards our Saviour, and had so great a sense of Religion too as to *build a Synagogue*, was a *Soldier*; a Captain of a v. s.

Company of *Romans* Quarter'd at *Cpaernaum*, and himself a Heathen, and at most only a Profelyte of the Gate, such a one as *Cornelius* was, *Acts* 10. 1. who though he had not embraced the whole *Jewish* Religion, yet had renounced the Worship of the Heathen God's, and was a Devout or Pious Man, and one that feared God with all his House, and gave much Alms to the People, and Prayed to God alway.

What a lovely Character is here of two that were *Men of the Sword*, as we call them! *Officers* and those not of the highest rank, but such as were Quarter'd up and down, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, to awe the Conquered *Jews*, and keep them in a quiet Obedience to their new Governours; under the temptations of Idleness and Ease, and who had power in their hands to defend what irregularities they should be guilty of towards a despised and vanquished People.

And the Character is the more surprising, because Men of that Profession too generally deserve one of another kind, nay, and justify it too as most proper for Men of their way; and which is worse still ridicule any thing of Pity and Compassion, and a modest humble Deportment, and
pious

pious sense of Religion, as meanness of Spirit and Cowardice.

As if Courage consisted in Hectoring and making a Noise, in Lewdness and Debauchery, in a Surly Haughtiness and Unrelenting Cruelty of Disposition; and that whoever would be a good Soldier, must be a very bad Man, and a worse Christian.

But this is all over a very great mistake, and there is no true courage but what is founded in Vertue; and with the Romans the same Word * signifies both: And * *Virtus.* their Etymologists derive it from *Vir*, * a * *A viro* Man, intimating, that nothing is truly *Virtus appellata est,* good and brave, but what is agreeable to *viri autem maxime propria est fortitudo.* the excellency of the Humane Nature, and preserves the honour of it unsully'd *Cicer.* with base and brutish practices. *2. Tusc. Quest.*

To roar and rave, and do all the mischief they can, without regard to any thing of Humanity and Vertue, is no better than the Rage and Fierceness of a Lyon or a Tyger, and very far from Courage; which is a Rational and Manly thing, and by consequence the reputation of it can never be justly gained by any unreasonable and inhumane actions.

And accordingly, 'tis always observed that Men of the greatest and most gene-

rous Spirits, are the most gentle, and kind, and good; apt to be touched with the tenderest Passions, not at all insulting and imperious, but humble and modest, and what we call by a very proper and expressive Word, *Humane*. As if none could behave themselves so much like *Men*, as those that have least of the fierceness of Brutes, and of the Pride, and Malice, and Mischief of the Devil.

Courage is opposed to Fear, and consists in such a due contempt of Hardship, and Danger, and Pain, and even of Death it self, as that we can with firmness and resolution of mind, venture our Fortunes, our Liberty, and our Lives, and bravely part with them too, in our Religions or our Countries Service and Defence. But who are so likely to be thus above the fears of Death, and what may probably lead to it, as those whose sincere good Life gives them a well grounded hope of a Happy Immortality? What is it that makes a Man so indifferent to the World, as not to value any thing in it in comparison with a good and quiet Conscience, but the expectation of infinitely better things hereafter?

And accordingly, how truly great was the bravery of that Noble Army of Martyrs

Martyrs, who for the sake of Jesus and his Truth undauntedly suffer'd the most exquisite Torments, and that deliberately and in Cool Blood, when the saying a few Words, or throwing a little Incense into the Fire, would have procured their ease and safety! And yet Gentleness, and Meekness, and Humility, and all the softer Affections of Humane Nature, were very remarkable likewise in all their carriage even to their cruel and inveterate enemies.

Natural Courage, indeed, that is Briskness and heat of temper, kept up by full feed, and raised by example, and the sound of warlike Instruments, *the thunder of the Captains, and the shouting*, may for a while inspirit a Man to a forgetfulness of Danger, and make him *rush into the Battle rejoicing in his strength, marching on to meet the armed Men, and mocking at Fear, and scorning to turn back from the Sword*; but this is the very description that is given in the Book of Job, of the Courage of a Horse: another sort of Courage be-
Job. 39.
17.

comes the Man that rides him, such as will continue when every thing else fails, be more confirm'd by hazards and hardship, and even *in extremis* make him more than conquerour.

When

When all is done, the best Man, much more the best Christian must needs make the best Soldier. For, as those whose lives are always in their hand, and the common uncertainty of them made much more so by the chance of war, are more concerned than ordinary to keep their Souls in a good condition for eternity, because they of all men, *know least of the Day and hour*; so, if they are so wise as Daily to dye before hand by a serious and devout Preparation, 'twill be so far from sinking their Spirits and abating their Courage, that Death will be made familiar to them by often thinking of it and providing for it, and be rendred much less dreadfull when disarm'd of its *sting* by a sincere Repentance and Religious life.

1 Cor. 15.
56.

Whereas to a lewd wicked wretch, it must needs look extremely Terrible, especially when it appears in the various horrid shapes of a Battle, and the Terrors of Conscience are added to those of the fight, and he reflects that the point of the next sword he meets with or the next piece that is discharged may open his way to Hell.

No Doubt but such Reflections are often made, and quickly found to be true; and

and no wonder if the apprehension Men are under lest it should be so, puts many a one upon too hasty a retreat: For nothing makes men more Cowardly than *guilt*. And could an Army be compos'd of Men like *Cornelius* and the good Centurion here, who were Officers of the *iron Legion*, as 'twas call'd from their hardiness and unconquer'd Valour; 'twould be invincible. *For the wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the Righteous are bold as a Lyon.* Dio. Hist.
Rom. lib.
55.
Prov. 28.

These two excellent Persons, we may^{1.} believe were sensible of what we have now been discoursing; and have left such a character behind them, and that transmitted to us by Men that could not flatter, as would become the highest station in the Church. And indeed, true piety and goodness, are so far from being Inconsistent with a military Life, that they are the greatest ornament of it, and far beyond the most Glorious Trophies of Victory. And however it came to be so very much otherwise, the employment of a Soldier is not only peculiarly apt to oblige men to be even better than ordinary, but upon all accounts makes it highly necessary that they should be so, as we observ'd just now.

And

And consequently, those under whose Pay and Command they are, have the greatest reason by a due and impartial distribution of rewards and punishments among them, to encourage those that are sober and well inclin'd, and discountenance and disgrace those that are not.

And what a world of good might be done by religious Commanders and Officers, if according to the pious and strict charge of a late Royal Proclamation for preventing and punishing Immorality and Prophaneness, they would take care to avoid all things of this nature themselves, and by the Piety and Vertue of their own Lives and Conversations set a good example to all such as are under their Authority, and likewise carefully inspect the behaviour and manners of all such as are under them, and punish all those that shall be guilty of any of the Dissolute, Immoral and Disorderly Practices which are therein specify'd; that so being reduc'd to shame and contempt, they may be inforc'd the sooner to reform.

Among the ancient Romans, whose Courage none can question, a Camp was like a College; their Commanders were not only the bravest, but the wisest and best of Men: And their excellent example, and watchful care, and well plac'd

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rewards, and due severity when there was occasion, made even a common Roman Soldier look'd upon with Honour and Esteem, as one whose business it was to protect the People from their Enemies, to enlarge their Dominions and win them Glory with his blood; and when at home and out of action, was as regular and inoffensive and useful too, as any other Man.

Their Military Discipline, (as one of their Authors truly says, who writ in the same Reign when our two good Centurions were in Commission, that of Tiberius) was the chief beauty and establishment of their Empire, in whose bosom and under whose safeguard, their Peace and Tranquility did securely rest: And when afterwards their Armies grew debauch'd their Empire sunk to nothing, as any one may read in their Histories.

So much therefore depending upon the good morals of military Men, and those in command having it so much in their Power to reform those that are under them, perhaps more than any other sort of Governours; as it concerns the Government more than a little to advance the

Militaris Disciplina, Principium Decus & stabilimentum Rom. Imperii; in cuius sinu ac tutela, serenus tranquillisque Beata Pacis Status Acquiescit. Valer. Max. Lib. 2. Cap. 2.

the soberest Men and best Christians to so great a trust, so those that are thus intrusted are bound by all the ties Imaginable, as they will answer it to God and their Country and all the wiser World, by an exemplary piety and strict discipline to endeavour a reformation of what at present stands so extreemly in need of it.

Only to *attempt* so great a work would be truly noble and heroical; but to *succeed* in it, (and which I don't know why we should despair of) would be of equal Glory and Advantage to the Nation, and to the immortal honour of those great Men, who could reduce to good morals and civility the most profligate and lewd of humane race.

The next thing observable, is the tender care this good Centurion took of his sick Servant; whom a benumbing disease had confin'd to his bed, and made unable, not only to serve his Master, but so much as to help himself, and brought to the Point of Death.

How long he had been in this condition we are not told, but his being *ready to Die*, intimates that the Palsie was of considerable continuance; for that distemper not immediately affecting the vitals, is usually

usually a great while before it kills, and some it hath made helpless for many years, next door to Death, but yet preserv'd in a kind of senseless and imperfect Life, as 'twere only to try the Patience, and Charity, and good Nature, and Duty of those that are about them, to whom they must needs be a very great burthen and a constant trouble.

But a bed rid *servant*, most People would think to be Intolerably Burthen-some: For besides the loss of his service and the charge of his keeping and attendance, and the disorder too that it must needs cause in a Family, there is in this case no tye of natural affection, no expectation of advantage at Present or hereafter, which might sweeten the trouble and make one go through it the better; 'tis all for God's and Pity's sake, which are arguments of perswasion that even among Christians would not, I doubt, by their own naked force prevail with very many in such a case as this.

How great then was the goodness and compassion of this Heathen Centurion, for so long a time to bear the inconveniences of a disabled Servant's helpless condition, in his own house, that his eye being over him, no assistance might be wanting;

wanting; and when he heard of *Jesus*, to make as earnest sute to him in his behalf, as he could have done for the Wife of his Bosom, a Parent, or a Child, or as this faithful Servant could have done for *him*.

But, no doubt he rightly consider'd that a Good Servant is to be reckon'd among the number of our friends; and is and ought to be so dear to every Good Master, as that nothing should be wanting which 'tis in the Masters Power to do to relieve and support him in his necessity, what e'er it is. And if the meereft stranger hath a right by all the Laws of nature and Religion to what help and succour we can give him in distress; much more hath one of our own family, and who, when he was able, employ'd his best endeavours in our service. And nothing would be more barbarous and ungrateful too, than to suffer a poor creature to want, who was always Respectful; Obedient, and true to me, and whom providence hath so particularly committed to my care, that if I have no bowels he must perish. Not but that the Servants own Relations, if near enough and of sufficiency, are chiefly bound to look after and provide for him; but if they either can't or will

will not, we must follow the example of this excellent Centurion.

But then, if servants would expect their Masters Kindness in time of Need, such kindness especially as this, they must behave themselves so as to deserve it; that is, with faithfulness, humility and an observant Diligence. They must study to endear themselves by a constant, sincere, and affectionate duty, and then they may hope for a suitable return. But a false, a sloathful, a wicked and ungovernable servant, if both God and Man desert him, hath no more than is his due.

'Tis the wisdom therefore, of those who have nothing but what they must work for, and whose intire dependence in case of sickness or any other misfortune, is upon the Good will of others; 'tis no doubt their wisdom to get as much of that favour and good will as may be, by their Obliging, Careful and Honest Behaviour, as not knowing how soon they may stand in need of it, and how miserable they will be if it should be deny'd them. And let them consider how bitter the Remembrance will be of their Idleness and Negligence, their pilfering and purloining, their pride and sawsiness, and profuse wastfulness and the like; when

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they

they find the want of a friend in their necessity, and reflect that 'twas those Ill Qualities and Practices, which threw them out of the care and esteem of those, who otherwise would have supported them in their distress!

Tit. 2. 9.
Colof. 3.
22.

I don't at all question, but this has been the condition of many foolish servants, who might have wanted for nothing had they taken St. Paul's advice, and studied to *please their Masters well in all things, not answering again; not with eye service, but shewing all good fidelity in singleness of heart.* But to do all they can to disoblige, to regard nothing but their own ease and pleasure, and present gain and advantage, and too often by very unjust methods; and after all expect as much kindness as if they had been the best Servants in the World; is unreasonably to presume upon their Masters extraordinary goodness, and 'twill be no strange thing if they find themselves sadly mistaken.

The Centurions charity was indeed very great to his Bed-ridden servant, and 'tis our duty to do like him; but then we must remember 'twas a Servant that had made himself dear to him by his diligence and fidelity. So that the good and faithful, is really the only wise Servant: and

he that gains his Masters love by a Conscientious discharge of his duty to him, lays up a Treasure that will turn to much better account, than all that by ill Arts he can prog and hoard for himself.

Nor was this excellent Person's *Piety* less than his compassion; or his Publick munificence than his Private charity. He had so great a sense of Religion, and the Worship that is due to the one true God, and which his living amongst the *Jews*, and reading their writings might very much increase; that he had a real Love for that religious Nation: And at his own expence, by the help of his Soldiers (whom the wise *Romans* always kept in employment) *had built them a Synagogue.* A place in the nature of our Parish Churches, for the performance of Divine Service on their weekly Sabbaths, that is, for Prayer, and reading and expounding the Law; (for Sacrificing was confined to the Temple at *Jerusalem*) and which sort of buildings the *Jews* were then allow'd to erect where ever they thought convenient, and to have proper Officers to govern and take care of them.

Now for a *Soldier* to build a *Church*, would be look'd upon as very extraordinary even among Christians; and so nar-

row are our Souls, so cool our Zeal, so very little our Religion, that instead of new Works of this nature, not only Soldiers, but truly those of much higher pretensions, can scarce find in their hearts to keep up the old with tolerable decency, those sacred structures which the Piety of our Ancestors with so great cost erected, but suffer them too generally to be over-run with neglect and nastiness.

But for a *Roman Soldier* to build a *Jewish Synagogue* is more extraordinary still, and bespeaks not only a great Sense of the excellency of their Worship as was said, but likewise a truly generous and ingenuous Spirit; which could thus conquer the prejudices of Education and incline him to think so well of, and be so great a benefactor to a Religion, which had so bad a name in all the Heathen World, and no where worse than at *Rome*.

But, he that sincerely seeks for Truth, especially in a matter of such Consequence as Religion, will prize it, wheresoever he finds it, and the more for his being so long before in error. And as to think freely and impartially is the best way to have right and clear Notions of things; so those that dare thus think, and are neither
afraid

afraid nor asham'd to retract an error when they have discover'd it, nor to Countenance the Opposite Truth however the vogue of the World may go against it: those are the Men, and those only who act like creatures that are endowed with reason.

Had not our Centurion here taken the liberty to look into the *Jewish* Religion, and examine and consider it well, and compare his own with it fairly and without Prejudice, he would never have been so sensible as he was of the mighty difference between the ridiculous fopperies of Heathen Idolatry and Superstition, and the rational Belief and manly Worship of one great and holy and good Being, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. Rom. II. 36.

And had not his Love of Truth been undissembled and sincere, whatever he had *Thought*, he would never have so openly favour'd a despis'd and hated Sect, as to be at the great expence of building a Place for their Religious Assemblies; and which too was in danger of being ill represented to his Superiors, as giving too great encouragement to a mutinous and discontented people, when his business was to awe and keep them down.

But he was acted, as I said, by a truly great and ingenuous Spirit, and valu'd truth above all things; and very probably (though the Gospel indeed says nothing of it) such excellent beginnings had a happy conclusion, and he that had so good an opinion of the Religion of the *Jews*, we can't but think had a better of Christianity, which was the Completion and Perfection of it: especially when Jesus confirm'd the truth of his Doctrine by such Amazing Miracles, and rescu'd his sick Servant (as we shall see presently) from the gates of death.

But however that might be, he hath given us a shining example of an impartial and unprejudic'd love and pursuit of truth; and his noble encouragement of it, in so extraordinary a manner, and at a time when error was predominant, does justly reproach that luke-warm indifference which is now too visible amongst us, in the defence and support of the perfection of all truth, *even the light of the knowledge, or the clear knowledge and splendor, of the Glory of God, in the face, or person of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. 4. 6.

In the next place we may observe the great *Modesty and Humility* of this excellent Centurion; who instead of valuing him-

himself upon his *Commission* and Station in the *Roman* Army, or his late Benefaction to the *Jews*, and thereupon with a forward assurance addressing himself to Jesus, as if he could deny him nothing, was full of humble acknowledgments of his unworthiness, being a *Gentile*, to approach the sacred presence of so great a Prophet, knowing that the *Jews* look'd upon themselves as polluted by Converse with the uncircumcised: and therefore with great respect he sent his Friends the Elders of the *Jews*, to beg that he would Cure his Servant; and they besought our Lord *Instantly* for him, and spoke largely of his deserts who thought himself unworthy.

And indeed humility and modesty are the inseparable attendants of true worth; and persons of the greatest name in Scripture and whose characters we may securely depend upon, are peculiarly remarkable for a very low and mean esteem of themselves. 'Twill not be amiss to Instance in some few.

How great a favourite of God was *Jacob*; honoured with frequent heavenly visions, and Revelations from God himself, whom as he tells us *he had seen face to face* Gen. 32. and who had promis'd him that *in 30.*

Gen. 28. 14. *his seed all the families of the Earth should be Blessed; and yet, what an humble confession does he make of his unworthiness! I am less than the least of all the Mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewn unto thy servant.* Gen. 32. 10.

And Moses too, when God appear'd to him, and made choice of him for the Deliverer of his people Israel from their Cruel Bondage in Egypt, though he was the fittest person in the World for that great employment, as having been brought up in that court from his infancy by the Daughter of one of their Kings, and educated by her, and become a great proficient, in all the Egyptian learning, and thoroughly acquainted with their customs and manner of address, and of a majestick presence too, together with great Experience and Courage: yet such indifferent Thoughts had he of himself, that he said unto God, *Who am I! that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt?*

Exod. 3. 11.

And David also, that equally Valiant and Pious Prince, who is said to be a *Man after God's own Heart*, and, was chosen by him, in a manner very extraordinary, to be the Governour of his People;

ple; was not only so humble and modest in his private Condition, as when *Saul* offer'd him his Daughter to Wife, to say *what am I! and what is my Life, or my Fathers Family in Israel, that I should be Son-in-Law to the King?* But when himself a King and in the midst of his Successes and Triumphs, and flush'd with Victory over his Rebellious Subjects, he was so far from being transported to a forgetfulness of either God or himself, that he gratefully acknowledges God to be the Author of all, and thus humbly reflects upon his own unworthiness, *Lord what is Man that thou hast such respect unto him, or the Son of Man that thou so regardest him!* Psal. 144.

And, to mention no more, the two great Apostles of our Lord, *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, were so like their Divine Master in Meekness and Lowliness of Heart; that the former, when Christ called him to be a Fisher of Men, and by a Miracle intimated to him his wonderful Success, immediately, as Conscious how little he deserved that Honour, and how unfit he was for so great a Work, *threw himself at Jesus knees, and said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful Man, O Lord.* Luk. 5. 8. And the latter calls himself *the chief of sinners, the least of the Apostles, not worthy to be called an Apostle,* 1 Tim. 1. 15. because

because he once, though ignorantly, Persecuted the Church of God; and all his Labours and Successes, he ascribes not to himself, but to the Grace of God that was with him. And when the Corinthians contemptuous usage of him, forced him to assert his Apostolick Authority, and to say something in commendation of his discharge of that High Trust; yet 'tis plain he does it unwillingly and upon Compulsion, and blames them for bringing that Necessity upon him, and protests that 'tis for their sakes, that their having a just esteem for him might make them the more obedient to his Government, and observant of his Directions, and keep them from running after False Teachers which were then crept in amongst them: And after all confesseth that of himself he is nothing. As may be seen at large in the four last Chapters of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

How careful should we be to imitate these excellent examples, and preserve our Souls from being puffed up with Vanity and Self-Conceit! I suppose 'twill easily be granted, that even our highest attainments, will leave us still far short of the Patriarchs, of *Moses*, the Prophets and the Apostles; how ridiculous therefore,

fore, and unsufferable will Pride and Haughtiness be in us little Wretches, when an Humble Modesty was so Conspicuous in them!

Indeed, 'tis your little Wretches, who deserve least, that set up themselves the most; and the Narrow-Soul'd, Shallow and Ignorant, who know very little of themselves or any thing else, are most apt to be carried away with a fond admiration of their own deserts and worth. And, as the Apostle expresses it, *measuring themselves only by themselves, their own Flattering Fancies, and comparing themselves* ^{2 Cor. 10. 12.} *among themselves*, are very far from Wise.

Whereas those whose Mind is truly great, and their Thoughts employed upon the noblest Objects, and busied in forming excellent and useful designs; discover so much of their own Weakness and Ignorance, Dependency and Imperfection, as takes off all Vain-glorious Self-complacency in any thing they are, or have, or do: And the better it is, the less reason do they find to value themselves upon it, or claim propriety in the praise that is given to it, keeping down all towering Thoughts with this humbling reflection, *What hast thou that thou didst not receive?* ^{1 Cor. 4. 7.}

No

No sooner was the Centurions request made known to our Lord, and likewise his Character by those who came from him, but his Compassion for the Poor Paralytick Servant, and his Respect for a Person of so great Worth, and no less Modesty, and which made his Worth much the greater, inclined him immediately to comply with their desire and go with them towards his house.

And this as it shews the great Goodness and Condescension of our Blessed Master, who went so readily to Visit and to Heal one of so low a Condition as a Soldiers Servant (who generally were Slaves taken in War) so it should teach us to go and do likewise. And no Charity is greater, and more dis-interess'd, than to Minister to the Necessities of the Sick-Poor, and Personally to Visit them as we have Opportunity; for the very sight of a Rich Neighbour in the Cottage, and at the Bed-side of a Poor, Languishing, Dispirited, Needy Creature, is a Cordial that strangely revives, and to hear Words of Comfort and Kindness from him as good as half a Cure.

How happy would it be were all of us in our several stations of this truly Christian Temper; thus tenderly concerned
for

for one another's Misfortunes, delighting to ease the burthens of the afflicted and glad when it lies in our Power! As full of pity to the Distressed as the Centurion, as Sollicitous in their behalf as the Elders, and as willing as the Blessed Jesus, to give Succour and Relief!

Now as Jesus was going upon this charitable design, when he was not far from the House, the Centurion himself, as St. Matthew relates it, came out to meet him, and begg'd him to give him self no further trouble to come under a roof so unworthy to receive him as his was, *But say in a word, says he, and my servant shall be heal'd; for I am a Man set under Authority having Soldiers under me, and I say unto one go and he goeth, and to another come and he cometh, and to my servant do this and he doth it.* As if he had said, "Lord, I am so assur'd of thy
"Divine Power, that wouldst thou but
"say my Servant shall do well, it would
"be so, although thou shouldst not see
"or touch him, for distance can be no
"hindrance to Omnipotence. And if
"My Word of Command to a sort of
"Men not over Tractable and Obedi-
"ent, and who my self am but an In-
"feriour Officer, and under the Com-
"mand

“mand of another, be sufficient to effect
 “many things without my presence at
 “the Execution; how Infinitely more
 “effectual will thy Almighty Word be
 “to chase away the most Inveterate dis-
 “eases even at a distance, whose Ser-
 “vants the Bright Host of Angels are,
 “always attending with the greatest dili-
 “gence to perform thy Pleasure?

V. 9.

Matt. 8.
13.

At this strange pitch of Faith in an Hea-
 then, our Lord seems to be more than a
 little surpriz'd, for 'tis said, *That when Je-
 sus heard these things he marvelled at him,
 and turned him about and said to the People
 that followed him, I say unto you I have not
 found so great Faith, no not in Israel. And
 then, as the reward of it, He said unto
 him, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed
 so be it done unto thee, and his Servant was
 healed in the self same hour.*

Very extraordinary all along has been
 the behaviour of this Centurion, but this
 Crowns all. His tender care and concern
 for his sick Servant, his great Ingenuity
 and love of Truth, his Generous and pub-
 lick Spirit, his remarkable Modesty and
 Humility, and now at last so great a Faith,
 so nobly and feelingly express'd, caus'd
 wonder even in the Son of God, and
 such a Testimony of Approbation, as re-
 dounds

dounds more to his Honour than if he had been conqueror of all the World.

And O that we could be like him as in the other parts of his Character, so also in this! That we could always have such a strong and lively Faith in our Lords infinite Power, Veracity, and Goodness, as might cause all perplexing distrustful doubts, to vanish and establish in our Breasts a firm unshaken assurance, that he is both able and willing to *save to the utmost all that come to God by him.* Heb. 7.25. That all his Promises are *Yea, and Amen*, and all his threatnings too, and that during our continuance here upon this Earth, his watchful Providence will never leave us nor forsake us, but order all things for our greatest benefit.

This would chase us into so warm and feeling a Sense of the Infinite obligations we lie under in Point of Interest as well as gratitude and duty, to give up our selves intirely to the divine Guidance and Government, as would make it almost impossible for us not to be up and doing, and with a resolv'd and active diligence to work out our Salvation.

And when our Faith hath thus removed the Palsie from our numb'd stupid Souls, and warm'd our Hearts, and open'd
our

our Eyes, and strengthened the Hands that hung down and the feeble Knees, and quickned us up to a lively and affectionate Religion, that will again give new increase to our Faith; and the stronger that grows, the more vigorous and active still will our Religion be, till it becomes habitual to us and our chief delight. And so shall we go on with unspeakable Pleasure and Satisfaction *from strength to strength*, from one degree of Spiritual improvement to another, till we appear before our Glorious Lord in *Sion* that is above; that blissful place of Purity, and Joy, and Holy Love, and Praise, and Triumph without end!

Psa. 84. 7.

22. 7. 1011

And would we but come to Jesus in our times of need with the Faith and Earnestness of this Centurion, why should we not be as successful, and that for others as well as for our selves? 'Twas *his Prayer of Faith* as St. James expresses it, that procur'd Health to his sick Servant and rais'd him up, and many instances we have of like Nature in the Gospel, and why may not ours do the like? for the Compassion and Power of Jesus are now and always the same. Not that our Prayers, how full soever of faith and fervency, shall obtain *Miracu-*

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lous favours and mercies, for though Christ is as able to bestow them now as ever, yet there is not the same reason that he should, where the Gospel is settled and fix'd; because there the great end, for which Miracles were wrought at first, is attained already.

But yet, their success shall questionless be very great, though not Miraculous, *for the effectual fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much*; and there is no doubt to be made, but many a one fares much the better both in his Body and Soul, for the Prayers of a Pious Minister, or Parent, or Master, or Friend, or even a Stranger who is so charitable as to Interest others in his Supplications. — 16.

What an inexcusable Omission therefore is it, to think of no Body but our selves when we Address to God, and not to recommend our Children, our Relations and Family, or those for whom we are upon any other account more particularly concerned, to his favour and Blessing, who is able to do for them abundantly more than we can ask or think! If we are Oblig'd by our most Charitable Religion to Pray for *all Men* 1 Tim. 2:1. (and why are we so oblig'd if our Prayers

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will

will signify nothing?) nay even for our *Enemies*; how much more for our Friends and Benefactors, those of our own house, our own flesh and blood, or whom God in any more especial manner hath committed to our Care: and that with more than ordinary earnestness and Importunity in times of danger and distress, especially when the Dangers are spiritual, and such as none can deliver from but God?

How can a Parent, that hath any natural Affection in him, see his Off-spring making what haste they can to Hell, and not beseech God night and day to change their wicked Disposition, and turn their feet again into the ways of Life? How can a Master of any bowels observe (what is but too observable) his Servants in a dead Palsie to Religion, as little sensible of Spiritual things as the very Beasts that Perish; and not add earnest Prayer to other quickning methods, that God would touch their Hearts and make them live to him? And so in other cases of like nature.

And it deserves to be seriously consider'd, whether the sinful neglect of this Duty, (as *Samuel* truly calls it) be not one great reason that so many miscarry?

1 Sam. 12. 23. *St. James* says plainly, *Ye have not because ye ask*

ask not, and Jesus says, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name I will do it*: Since therefore, if our Petitions in this Instance were as urgent as they should be, and offered up with Pure hearts and Holy hands, and in full assurance of Faith, we have great reason to hope that they would be prevalent to our Friends and Relations good; we have as great reason to fear, that very much of the unhappiness of Mankind is owing to the too general Omission of thus supplicating God for one another, especially for those who seldom or never Pray for themselves, and are so numb'd as not to be sensible what a dangerous condition they are in.

However, if Mens own stubborn obstinacy hinders the removal of their *Spiritual* calamities, and the wisdom of God thinks fit to continue their *Temporal* ones; we have done our Duty, and shall not fail of our reward: Our good Intention will be very acceptable to God, and our Prayer shall return into our own Bosom. Psa. 45. 13.

In the fifth chapter of St. Luke, v. 18. we have an account of our Lord's healing another *Paralytick*, whom four Men carry'd to him, and because the crowd that was about the door where he then was

hindred them from coming in that way, so great was their Faith, *they open'd the Roof of the House, and let him down with his couch into the midst before Jesus*, who when he saw their Faith, said, *Man thy Sins are forgiven thee*. Which passage being all that is remarkable in that Miracle which is not in this which we have already consider'd, I thought fit to mention it here, without discoursing more particularly upon it.

And it informs us of this one thing further, That as our iniquities often bring *Temporal* as well as *Spiritual Evils* upon us, so those Evils shall not be removed till the Sins that caus'd them are forgiven, which they will not be without sincere Repentance. For all-though, when our Lord was Personally upon Earth, and Preached the Gospel himself, *Faith* was the great requisite, and of it self sufficient to qualifie the Miserable for his Miraculous Mercy, yet now, *Repentance* must be added to it. And he that has now incurr'd God's Displeasure by his Wickedness, and smarts under his Rod, must not only Pray and Believe that God will take it off, and restore him to his Favour, but he must endeavour to remove the cause too by such a *Godly Sorrow* for what hath been

Acts 2. 38.

3.—19.

been amiss, as will *work Repentance to Sal-* 2 Cor. 7.
vation never to be Repented of. First we 10.
must *Repent that those Sins may be blotted*
out, which brought the Punishment upon
us, and then, and not till then, may we
expect the removal of the Punishment.

And if the punishment, instead of
humbling a Sinner, ends in a hardned in-
sensibility of Soul to Religion, that Spi-
ritual Dead Palsie, which sometimes is
the consequence of a long wilful opposi-
tion to all the means of Grace, which
God hath afforded, and is indeed the most
dreadful condition of all: Though in this
Case 'tis true the Wretched Creature can't
Repent, unless God by some *extraordina-*
ry methods once more in Mercy awakens
in him some Spiritual Sense and Feeling,
which is but very seldom done, and
more than can be hoped for; yet 'tis
the Man's improving these enlivening
Touches by a deep Repentance, and tho-
rough Reformation that must compleat
the Cure.

It concerns us all therefore when we
find God's Rod upon us, with the greatest
Humility and unfeigned Repentance to
Address our selves to *him* who only hath
Power to forgive our Iniquities and re-
move their Punishments, Jesus that *Lamb*

of God which taketh away the Sins of the World; and with a constant importunity spread our Sad Case before him, begging his Help and Mercy, as we would beg for Life, and professing our most firm assurance that would he but speak the word only we should be Healed: And then, we need not doubt but that at length his Bowels will Yern over us, and incline him to take off his Correcting Hand, and renew our strength, and set our Hearts at liberty, and enable us to run with Cheerfulness and Patience the Race that is set before us, Heb. 12. 1.

And when by his Divine Assistance we have Fought the good Fight, and finish'd our Course; we shall by his Mercy and through his Merits, receive the Crown of Righteousness at the Day of Retribution.

Lord let thy merciful kindness be upon us, as we do put our trust in thee! Psal. 33. 21.

Amen, Amen!

The

The Seventh Miracle.

The Widow of Nain's Son restored to Life.

Luke VII. 11.

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a City called Nain, and many of his Disciples went with him and much People. Now when he came to the Gate of the City, behold there was a Dead Man carried out, the only Son of his Mother, and she was a Widow, &c.

AFTER our Saviour had Cured the Centurion's Paralytick Servant at Capernaum, and that at a distance, by saying only to the Centurion, *Go thy way*, Matt. 8. 13. *and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee*; he went the next day to another Neighbouring City called Nain, that there also he might Preach the Kingdom of God, and as occasion offered confirm the Truth of his Doctrine by Miracles of Mercy.

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And when he drew nigh to the Gate of the City; attended by *many of his Disciples, and much People* from Capernaum, who hearing of the Miraculous Cure he had wrought upon the Centurion's Servant, followed him to Nain, in hopes to see more of his wondrous Works; he met with a new opportunity of shewing his Divine Power, and convincing every Man that he was *the Sent of God*.

For behold, there was a Dead Man carried out of the City to be Buried, he was the only Son of his Mother, and she was a Widow, and much People of the City was with her, paying their last respects to the Deceased, and attending the sad Solemnities of so truly Mournful a Funeral. Nothing could be more affecting than such a sight as this; here was every thing that was apt to cause a mighty grief in the unhappy Mother, and great compassion in every Body else of any Bowels.

The Woman it seems had lost her Husband before, and I believe we may take it for granted, was thereby brought into a state of Sorrow and Trouble, in which her Cares were doubled and her best Friend gone; but God, with his usual goodness, had very much temper'd
and

and allay'd this Loss, by blessing her with a Son who grew up with her till he became capable of supplying his Fathers place, in all the instances of Filial Love, and Duty, and Assistance, which were owing to a most Affectionate and Indulgent Mother, who had been to him a Father and a Mother both.

How passionately she loved this her Son and Only Child, (as the Original imports) how all her Comforts upon Earth were centred in him, we may better imagine than express: especially if he was hopeful and promising as we have reason to think he was (though the Gospel indeed says nothing of his Character) because 'tis observable that Jesus never restored any to Life that were Dead, but those who were Pious and Good, as *Lazarus*, and those *Saints* that arose immediately after his own Resurrection; or else whose tender Age rendred them harmless and innocent, as *Jairus's* Daughter who was but Twelve Years Old. For a Second Life, would be too great a favour to be granted to such as had abused their First by Wicked Practices; and therefore, they were always left to the common fate of Sinful Mankind, which is to Live and Die but *once*, and then to come to *Judgment*. Matt. 27.
52.

Now Heb. 9.
27.

Gen. 44.
30.

Now if this Widow's Son, did thus deserve her tenderest affection, if she had reason to promise her self so much happiness in him, and *her Life was bound up in the Life of the Young Man*, as Old Jacob's was in Benjamin; (for no Love can be wanting in such a Case as this, and 'tis well if it proceeds not to excess) who can conceive the extremity of her Grief when this Joy of her Life was Dead! None certainly but such another Sufferer.

Prov. 31.
2.

To have the *Son of her Vows*, the only Fruit of her Womb, the Stay of her Widow-hood, the Staff of her Age, the Delight of her Eyes, all that was Lovely and Dear to her on Earth, Snatch'd away from her in the very Bloom of his Years! To find those Hopes, in which she lately pleased her self so much, all vanished in an instant; and in their room nothing but Black and Cutting Thoughts, and a Dismal Prospect of a most uncomfortable Life! Such a sad Change as this, must needs fill the Soul of so fond a Mother with an unmeasurable Sorrow, beyond what even she her self could be able to express; otherwise than by her Sighs and Tears and Mournful Accents. And therefore, when the Prophet

Prophet *Jeremy* called the *Jews* to the deepest and undissembled Mourning for their Sins, he words it thus; *O Daughter* Jer. 6.
of my People, gird thee with Sack-cloth and 26.
wallow thy self in Asbes, make thee Mour-
ning as for an only Son, most bitter La-
mentation.

Nor can we blame the first motions, even of an extraordinary Grief upon such an extraordinary Occasion; for Religion does by no means oblige us wholly to devest our selves of those Affections which God himself hath given us, nor indeed would it be Practicable if it should. As long as we continue to be what now we are, that is, a composition of Soul and Body, our Passions are as natural to us as our Appetites, and do what we can will be excited by their proper Objects; and we may as well pretend to be without Hunger and Thirst, or any Inclination to Eat and Drink when agreeable Food and Liquor is set before us and Nature wants a supply, as to be without any of our Passions when such things occur as are apt to raise and move them.

There's the same Foundation in Nature for them both; and both are equally useful, and would be equally innocent, did we not indulge and humour them too much;

much ; for 'tis *that* only that makes either of them Criminal and Hurtful, and it makes them both so alike.

No wonder therefore, if in such really sad Circumstances, this Poor Woman here was in very great Affliction ; and that without any just reflection upon her Religion, and submission to the will of God, provided she did not suffer it to proceed too far : For indeed the best People are always of the most tender imprefible Disposition, and our Saviour himself was remarkably so, as is evident from the whole story of his Life, particularly when he saw this mournful spectacle, and had learn'd how great the unhappy Mothers loss was, and how just her sorrow ; *He had Compassion on her, and said unto her weep not.*

He was so far from reproving her grief, that he was sensibly touch'd himself with her disconsolate Condition ; *his bowels yern'd over her*, as the Original signifies, and though a perfect stranger to her as he was, vouchsafed to be her Comforter.

And still, even more than ever, does he take notice of our Afflictions with Pity and Commiseration. In this, or any other Instance of real trouble which God's Providence lays upon us, and we don't
create

create to our selves, he will support us by the Inward Consolations, of his Blessed Spirit, and carry us through them beyond what we could think, Provided we are willing to be Comforted, and are not Resolved to Torment our selves against all Reason.

The first *Beginnings* of Sorrow, when the Cause is great, though for the Present not so Manageable as they should be, are yet very excusable, as was said, and an Object of Compassion both in God and Man; and God will certainly Apply Effectual Comforts in due Season to those that are not wanting to themselves, and we should likewise, every one according to his best Ability, endeavour to assuage the Anguish of a Troubled Breast. But those that cherish and foment their Grief till it grows Obstinate and Headstrong, and deaf to all advice; as they turn the Divine Compassion into anger, and render themselves not only unworthy, but incapable of *his* Refreshments; so every Faithful Friend should be a sharp reprove of such unreasonable and Unchristian behaviour.

But this was not the case of our sad Mourner. And therefore Jesus offer'd her his Comforts though unask'd; and
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mov'd by nothing but his own Compassion went to her and said *weep not.*

Isai. 65.
1.

But though he was thus *found of her who sought him not*, because she *knew him not*, and could not seek him; yet we who are so Happy as to know that he is the never failing Fountain of Consolation must not expect those Comforts we neglect to ask for, but earnest Prayer must procure them for us. We that have free access at all times to the Throne of his Mercy, and are encourag'd in all our Distresses to repair to him for Succour and Relief; must *pour out our Hearts before him, when our spirit is overwhelm'd, and shew him all our Trouble*, and 'twill be Highly Displeasing to him if we omit to do it; and who will pity those who sink under an Affliction, when they might have been supported, if they had desir'd it, by him who is never deaf to the Cry of the Poor Destitute that call upon him for help.

Matt. 11,
28.

Pfal. 142.

Now when Jesus, who was a stranger to this afflicted Mother, bid her *not Weep*, at a time when her Passion was at the height, and her Dead Son before her Eyes carrying to his dark Mansion in the Grave, where she must take a long Farewel of him,

him, and leave him to the Worms, to Stench and Rottenness; we may believe that those who knew him not, looked upon it as a great piece of Impertinence, and to very little purpose, and 'twould indeed have been so in any but our Lord. For what would it signify, when the Melancholy Pomp of a Funeral is passing by, should any of us officiously step up to the chief Mourner, that is a Mourner indeed, and unknown as we are, say, *Be not concerned, don't sigh and lament, but wipe off your Tears and be easy?*

But his Divine Words, no doubt, carried such Force and Power with them, as unaccountably affected this Disconsolate Woman, and like some rich Cordial, convey'd immediately such comfort to her as mightily refresh'd her sinking Spirits she knew not how nor why, and thereby convinc'd her that he was some extraordinary Person, and engaged her to listen further to him.

Nor is the written word of Jesus less *Quick and Powerful* now, to infuse New Life into a Soul Oppress'd with Grief, if by true Piety 'tis rendred capable of its chearing influences. Still as the Psalmist expresses it, *His word is our most effectual Comfort in our Trouble*, especially when skill-
Ps. 119: 50.

skilfully apply'd by the Ministers of Religion; who are appointed in their great Master's Absence, to *bind up the broken hearted*, and with the Good Samaritan to *Pour Oil and Wine into a wounded Spirit*.

The Consolations that are drawn from Holy Scripture, are of so Peculiar a Nature, and founded upon such noble Considerations, that they are the true *Specifick* for Affliction; and cannot fail of Raising the most Dejected Soul, and quieting the Throbings of the most troubled Breast, provided we suffer them to lie long enough upon our Thoughts to exert their full force and virtue.

John 14.
18.

They are truly *Divine* Comforts, and Operate in such a commanding way, and are attended with such an extraordinary Blessing that we must be extreamly to blame if they are not thoroughly successful. And thus hath our Gracious Lord abundantly made Good his Promise, when he said, *I will not leave you Comfortless*; his Word, his Spirit, and his Ministers, are always ready in his absence to say to the Mourners, *Weep not*; and to those that are in Trouble and Dejections, *Why are ye Disquieted, why are ye cast Down?* And this in such a Manner, and with such

such uncommon prevalency upon prepared Minds, as will shew they have derived their power from above.

And whoever has experienced, though but a little, that ease which such spiritual applications afford the sorrowful; will be so well satisfied of their Sovereign excellency, and the insufficiency of every thing else, as earnestly to desire still more and more, and intirely give himself up to the Divine *Regimen*, till the Cure is completed.

When Jesus had thus prepared the Mournful Mother for the reception of so surprizing a Blessing as he was going to confer upon her; and by his cheering words made her able to bear those suddain transports of Joy which would attend it, and which otherwise might have been more insupportable than her grief: He orders the Bearers of the Dead Young Man to stand still. Upon this, as those who attended the Corps could not but wonder, what should be the meaning of a strangers thus intermeddling, and interrupting the Funeral procession, and the Disciples of Jesus and the Company that came with him, were Big with expectation of what would follow; so the sad Widow too

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we may suppose, was not without some confused Presages of an approaching good.

But how was she struck, when with a look of Majesty that was more than humane, she saw him go up to the *Bier*, and touch that in which the Body was wrapt up, and heard him say with a Commanding Voice, *Young Man, I say unto thee, Arise!* how impatient was she of the Event! Which had it not answered her now high-raised hopes, would have been a Cruel Sporting with her Calamity, and if possible have sunk her lower than ever in the depths of Sorrow.

But she was not long kept in Suspence; for the most Merciful and Almighty Jesus, *who quickneth whom he will*, and in the First Creation breathed into Man's Nostrils the Breath of Life, and at the close of all things will call effectually the longest Sleepers from their Beds of Dust and awaken them into Immortality, made this Young Man immediately to Hear and Obey his All-Powerful Summons. His Soul returned at the Command of him who gave it, and again took full possession of her late abandon'd habitation; which was now restored to its former Strength and Soundness, and made
once

once more capable of Vital Union with her.

And to convince the astonished Mother, and wondring People, that 'twas no deception of their sight, but really and truly so, *he that was Dead* began to exercise the Functions of Life, *and sat up and spoke* as formerly; and when he was come down from the Bier, *Jesus delivered him to his Mother* in perfect Health and Vigour.

Lord, what a present was here! which though of all things in Nature the most welcome, yet, one would think, she should be almost afraid to receive. And what a mixture of Passions was there in the Mother, and her Son, and those that saw the Miracle! What Ecstasies of Joy, what Wonder and Amazement! What Aweful Fear and Dread! What Love and Thankfulness, Veneration and Praise, of the Compassionate and All-Mighty Jesus!

How tender and affectionate were the embraces which the now *glad* Mother gave her dearest Son, who was thus Miraculously Born again to her in the midst of her then *hopeless* Sorrows, and rescued from the Dead! What a new flood of Tears was then poured out, which Joy supplied as plentifully as Grief had done

before, when she beheld those Eyes which had been set in Death, moving again with all their usual Graces! And O how Charming was that Voice, which now, instead of Dying Groans and Sad Farewells, with which it lately Pierc'd her Soul down to the Quick; spoke nothing but Comfort, and promis'd greater happiness than ever!

Nor could the Young Man himself be without great astonishment, at his unaccountable return from the World of Spirits; but yet had no great reason to rejoice at a change so disadvantageous to him as this was, unless upon account of his grieved Mothers satisfaction, and the opportunity that was given him of seeing and believing in Jesus, whom he could not but conclude to be the then expected Messias, since he had so wonderfully restored him to Life. And 'tis not improbable that part of Christ's intention in this Miracle, was that both Mother and Son might be so happy as to become his Disciples, and the Young Man, find it worth his while to live again; for otherwise, though to his Mother indeed, his Resurrection was matter of great Joy, yet 'twould have been highly prejudicial to himself (upon our former supposition that he was

Virtuous

Virtuous and Good) whereas our Blessed Lord never wrought any Miracles but what were highly beneficial.

And well might there *come a Fear on all that* saw this Wondrous Sight; well might they Glorifie God and say, *That a great Prophet was risen up among them, and that God had visited his People.*

Leave we the now happy Mother and her Friends magnifying the Goodness and Power of Jesus, and changing the Mournful Solemnities of the Young Man's Funeral into a Birth-day Festival; and let us improve this whole Relation into some useful reflections upon what it very lively Represents, the Sorrows and Sadnesses that are inseparable from this State of Mortality, and the uncertainty and short duration of its greatest Comforts, and the unspeakable Joys of a Glorious and Triumphant Resurrection to Life Eternal, and which alone deserves the name of Life.

The Holy Scripture speaks of nothing with more contempt than the circumstances of our condition here below. Sometimes it says, *Man walketh in a Vain* ^{Psal. 39. 6.} *Shadow*, and calls Humane Life a *Vapour*, a very Meteor and False Blaze, that makes a shew for a little while, *and then* ^{Jam. 4. 14.} *vanisheth*

vanisheth away; and when it sets it out to the greatest advantage, it only compares it to a common *Flower of the Field*, which though fresh and beautiful and promising at first, yet lasts but a little while, though suffered to flourish to the end of its short Period, and then of course it must drop its gay leaves and die.

But as of Flowers, so of Mankind, how very few are there that stand so long; being either nip'd in their tender bud, or suddenly snap'd off when just arriv'd to their Perfection! Whole fields of them cut down at once by War, falling like Grass before the stroke of the Mower, or wither'd by a blast of Pestilential air, or destroy'd by some latent Disease which like a worm quickly consumes them to nothing, so that *their Place shall know them no more*.

Thus in the midst of even the most flourishing Life *we are in Death*, and our little-short-liv'd, precarious enjoyments, are so imperfect, and dash'd with so much bitterness and sorrow, that 'tis a just account which *Job* gives of the Present state of every one that is *Born of a Woman*, from the highest to the lowest without excepting any; *He is few of Days, and full of Trouble, and cometh forth as a Flower, and is cut down.*

And

And so innumerable are the ill accidents to which we lie continually exposed, and are often surpriz'd by, when we least expect them, which either cut our days off in the midst, or else seal us up to a tedious lingering Calamity; that Affliction, of one sort or other, seems as natural to degenerate Mankind, as happiness was to the state of Innocence.

But then this is our great comfort, or we may thank our selves if it is not, that this Melancholy Scene will not last always.

This Life of trouble is but of short continuance; the days of it are *few* as well as *evil*, and they flit away apace, and a happy Eternity is at the end of them to all but those who are resolv'd to be miserable in both Worlds.

Let a good Christian therefore in all his Afflictions look beyond the Present, and *lift up his eyes to the Everlasting hills*; and think how happy he shall be when plac'd there for ever out of the reach of that inundation of troubles which in a continued succession were here always rowling in upon him, and threatning to swallow him up! Let him think what inexpressible delight he shall take in those new blisful regions of the Blessed, where

there shall be *no more Crying and Tears, and Sorrow and Sighing shall be done away for ever*, and nothing wanting but the Resurrection of his Body to make his happiness compleat and full.

And let him think too how joyful and glorious that Resurrection shall be! When that frail composition of Flesh and Blood, which here was but a hindrance to his mind, and mightily took him off from the most Noble and Heavenly employments, by engaging him in many mean and servile drudgeries, and tormenting him with sharp Pains and Diseases; nay, prov'd a treacherous tempter too to wicked and destructive Courses: When this Poor Mortal thing shall have put on Immortality, and be refin'd to that degree as to be able to live and move as Spirits do, and be a most agreeable dwelling for an Immaterial Inhabitant in a Spiritual World! Let him think I say, what Joy unutterable will be then diffus'd through the whole glorified Man, and with what Infinite Pleasure he shall survey that bright Angelical Body of his, the Beauty and Vigour of which shall never in the least decay to all Eternity!

How will such thoughts as these alleviate whatever misfortunes we shall meet with

with here ! and render Sicknes and Pain, and even Poverty it self, much more easie to be born, since we are sure a little, and it may be *very* little time, will put an end to all uneasie and uncomfortable things, and instate us in Life and Happiness eternal.

And if the loss of near Relations and dear Friends is our great grief, suppose as in the Instance of this Miracle, a Widow'd Mother loseth a Virtuous and only Son who is taken away from her in his most promising Age, to the sad disappointment of her hopes, so that her Soul is overwhelm'd with Sorrow ; let her remember that he is not lost for ever, for Christ will at length command him to arise from his cold Bed, and deliver him to her again in the form and beauty, and spirituality of an Angel, from thenceforth never to be parted from her, nor to know Disease, or Pain, or Trouble, much less Death any more, but be always as happy as she her self can desire.

Such reflections as these, the Apostle recommends to all Mourners as their greatest Cordial. 1 Thess. 4. 13. *I would not have you to be Ignorant, says he, concerning them which are asleep, (so soft a name he gives to Death from which we shall*

shall awake to a most glorious Life) that ye Sorrow not as others, the Heathens, which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him; for this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, so that you may depend upon it as a certain Truth, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord at the last great day, to receive to himself

Joh. 14. 3. those that are his, shall not prevent them which are asleep, or go into Heaven before those good Persons that are already dead; for the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Arch-Angel, and with the Trump of God, and the Dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the Clouds to meet the Lord in the Air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these Words. And who is there so far gone in grief, that such words as these will not comfort?

But shall we know one another at the Resurrection? Will not the glorious change that shall then be made in our vile Bodies give us quite another air than we had here below, and so render us as strangers to our nearest Relatives, and them to us? To

To such questions as these, 'tis fit we should answer with great Modesty; but truly I can see no reason to doubt, but that we shall *then* know each other as well as now. For if 'tis the Soul that gives the different air to the countenance of every Man (as 'tis most Probable it does) then 'twill follow, that the same Soul informing the Resurrection-Body, which informs this which we carry about with us now, will give the face the same aspect as before, that peculiar distinct Air and Feature whereby one Person shall be known from another then, by those that knew him here: Only wonderfully improv'd in Beauty and Lustre, and free from all Deformity and Imperfection, and even the least Infirmary and Blemish.

And this I am the rather inclin'd to believe, because 'twas always the Doctrine of the Church, that the very same Body that dy'd shall Rise again; though never so long since Mouldred into Dust, or the parts of it otherwise alter'd and dispers'd; and when the same Soul is Rejoyn'd to the same Body, what should hinder the Man from having the same look and likeness as before? and accordingly our Saviour, whose Resurrection was

an exact Specimen of ours, was as well known to his Disciples after he arose from the Dead, and Convers'd with them as visibly and distinctly, as ever. We are told indeed that two of them did not know him when he Walk'd with them towards *Emmaus*, but we are told likewise that 'twas because *their eyes were holden that they should not know him*. And though *his Body*, 'tis true was not Putrefi'd and resolv'd into Dust, yet that does not alter the Case, since those Bodies that are so, we are assured shall be rais'd again by the Almighty Power of God as much the same as his was.

To this we may add what St. *Matthew* tells us, ch. 27. 52. *That the Graves were Open'd, and many Bodies of Saints which slept arose, and came out of their Graves after his Resurrection, and went into the Holy City and Appeared unto many*; that is, as the best Interpreters understand it, were not only seen but *known*; for how could it be said that such and such were Risen from their Graves, unless they Appeared to those who knew them formerly with the same countenance they had before they dy'd; so that as they knew them to have been Dead and Buried, they were now as well assured that the very same Persons were alive again. And

And it is not Improbable, that that very ancient custom of Burying those of the same Family together in one place might be founded upon an Opinion, not only of their being to Live again in some other State, but likewise of their *knowing* one another there, and in which they were unwilling to be separated; believing it would be a great Satisfaction to them to see those that were nearest and dearest to them in this World share with them in the Felicity of the next; for what other benefit than this could be expected from laying such and such dead Bodies into the same piece of ground together? And if this was not the inducement, 'tis hard to conceive what was.

Now if this be so, with how great transport shall we embrace our deceased Relations at the Resurrection of the Just! when we and they shall meet never to part again, and hand in hand triumphantly Ascend together into the regions of Eternal Bliss! And what a mighty consolation will it be to any *Pious* Person, that mourns the loss of the dearest Friend in the World, to think that thus it will be e're long!

And

And thus we see what a reviving Cordial the blessed hope of a happy Resurrection is, amidst the various sorrows and afflictions of this World; how cheering the thoughts are of that joyful time, when we shall see an end of all our troubles, and recover all our losses that are worth recovering, and be filled with greater Ecstasies of Joy, even than those that our sad Widow felt, when the compassionate Jesus restor'd her only Son to Life, as she was following him with Tears and Lamentations to the Grave.

But let us withal remember that 'tis the Resurrection of the *Just* which we are speaking of, the joys of which the wicked shall have nothing at all to do with; for though they likewise shall be raised again at the last Day, yet 'twill be to their Condemnation, their endless Misery and Woe. And to such unhappy Wretches, all the Pains, and Sorrows, and Misfortunes they have endured here, will be but the sad fore-runners of those most exquisite and everlasting Torments to which they shall be doom'd when Christ shall come to Judge the World in righteousness, and give to every one his just desert.

How

How comfortable soever therefore, the thoughts of the Resurrection are to the truly good, which indeed will be the Crown and Consummation of all Gods favours to them; 'twill be quite another thing to the Wicked, even the day of their Eternal banishment from God and Heaven, into that dismal Place, where Horror and Despair, and unsufferable, yet endless Torture shall Pierce their Souls for ever.

And now will the Jolliest Sinners then bear to be parted from their dearest Relations, and singled out for Damnation, and plac'd on the left Hand of the to them Inexorable Judge, Standing like so many Condemn'd Criminals just ready for Execution! and what Agonies, think we, will they feel when they shall see the Rest of their Family received up into Glory, and they only, Unhappy they, left behind to wait for ever in Hell!

But thus it will certainly be when Jesus shall come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, and shall sit upon his Glorious Throne to Judge the Quick and the Dead. He will send forth his Angels to separate the Sheep from the Goats, and they shall carefully gather out from among the good
Matt. 25.
31.
Matt. 13.
all 41.

all them which do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire unquenchable, where shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. But the Righteous shall be Graciously Invited to enter into the Joy of their Lord, and shall be caught up into the Clouds to meet him, and shine forth for ever as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Heavenly Father.

Thus will the Resurrection be of the Just, and thus of the Unjust, and the very thoughts of either will very much affect the Soul; if good, with unspeakable comfort, or if wicked, with unspeakable dread.

And he that Believes, that as certainly as he shall die, that is, as certainly as he now lives, he shall at last be raised again, and have an Immortal Body joined to his Immortal Soul to make him capable of Endless Happiness or Endless Misery in his whole Man; and that that very Jesus shall be his Judge, who died to save him, and will not Condemn him till he has Damn'd himself; if he really believes this, and ever considers what Salvation and Damnation means: He will be inclin'd, with the utmost seriousness and application to lead this his First Life *Well*, because upon his so doing depends a happy or a miserable Eternity. For 'tis
that

that we are all designed for, that's the great end to which all our actions tend, and into which, as Death lets the Soul, the Resurrection shall bring the Body; and 'tis now put to our choice, whether both Body and Soul shall be *made or ruin'd* for Ages without end, and cause Joy to the Blessed Saints and Angels in Heaven, or to the Fiends of Hell.

Are not they then without understanding Psalm 53.
that work wickedness? And is it not the
greatest Wisdom to be *steadfast, unmoveable,*
always abounding in the Work of the Lord,
for as much as we know that our labour is 1 Cor 15.
not in vain in the Lord? ult.

“ May we therefore so seriously con-
sider the frailty and uncertainty of this
“ Mortal Life, as diligently to apply our
“ hearts to that Holy and Heavenly Wis-
“ dom whilst we live here which may in
“ the end bring us to Life Everlasting;
“ through the Merits of Jesus Christ
“ our Blessed Saviour and Redeemer!
“ Amen!

O

The

The Eighth Miracle.

*Five Thousand fed with five
Loaves and two Fishes.*

John VI. 5, &c.

When Jesus lift up his Eyes and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip whence shall we buy Bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do, &c.

THE Fame of Jesus being now spread abroad far and wide, by reason of his frequent Miracles, and admirable Sermons, and publick Disputes with the chief of the Jews, in which he always put them to silence; great numbers of People began to throng after him. Some in hopes of being Cured of their Diseases, others possibly out of curiosity and a desire of seeing strange sights, and others as believing him to be the Messiah the Christ and Saviour.

And

And this made it needful for him to retire sometimes, into unfrequented desert places, partly for privacy and devotion, and partly for refreshment; as we find him now gone aside privately with his Apostles into a Mountainous desert place belonging to the City of Bethsaida, that they might rest a while, for there were many coming and going, and they had not leisure so much as to eat. Luke 9: 10. Mark 6: 31.

But he was soon found out by the People, who in great numbers followed him thither; and when he lift up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as Sheep not having a Shepherd, and he healed their Sick, and began to teach them many things concerning the Kingdom of God. Luke 9: 11. — 34.

And questionless it was a very moving sight to the most Compassionate Jesus (as every Miracle gives us new occasion to stile him) who came to seek and to save that which was lost, to see so great a Multitude pressing after him into a desert, barren place, faint and tired, and full of expectations from him, and some with great labour and difficulty bringing their Sick along with them as to a certain Cure; this must needs make his Bowels

Yern within him, who was all Love and Tenderness to Mankind, and left the Blisful Bosom of his Heavenly Father that he might rescue them from all their Miseries.

Chap 5.

He was retired to that desert solitude, as was said, to refresh himself and his Apostles with a little rest and quiet, and plain homely food, and that he might have some leisure for Devotion, after a great fatigue which we find he underwent at *Jerusalem, Chap. 5.* But yet, as soon as he saw the People flocking to him, which probably was as soon as he came there himself, for 'tis said, *Mark 6. 33. That the People out-went them and came together unto him;* instead of being angry at their Intrusion into his Privacy, and vex'd at the disappointment they gave him of his desired retirement and intended meal, which was but necessary to recruit his wasted Spirits; he received them with much gentleness and pity, and weary as he was went on again with the great good works he had but just left off, and *healed those that had need of healing, and discoursed to them many things of the Kingdom of God.*

Indeed, as he said, *Chap. 4. 34. His meat was to do the will of him that sent him*

him and to finish his work; and that Good Shepherd, who afterwards laid down his Life for his Sheep, and came into the World purposely to do it, thought no pains or self-denials too much to do them good, and gather them into the safe-guards of his Fold.

Now this may be of excellent instruction to us, and teach us to deny our selves many satisfactions for the service of God, and the benefit of our Brethren; and when providence shall give us a fair opportunity of doing good to one another, and especially of advancing the interest of our Holy Religion, to let no consideration of trouble be our hindrance, but make even the necessary refreshments of nature to give place sometimes to what can't be done every day, and is of so much greater consequence.

He hath very little of our Lord's compassion in him, and holy zeal for the Kingdom of God, and love to those that have the same nature and interest, the same hopes and fears with himself, who thinks much to take more than a little pains, and suffer though it be repeated inconveniences, and debar himself of what otherwise he might enjoy, not only with innocence but great advantage; when he

may be the happy instrument of relieving the greatest necessities, and promoting the Salvation of those for whom Christ died.

And those who are the Pastors of the Flock of Jesus, to whose care he hath committed his Lambs and his Sheep in his absence, though their labours are such as make moderate refreshments necessary, and their duty such as requires a frequent recess from the World, to prepare them for the better discharge of it, and to beg God's Blessing and Assistance; yet neither the one nor the other should be indulged to any further than is conducive to the best interest of the Flock: even the divine pleasures of contemplation, in retirement and solitude, however delightful and improving to a Pious Mind, must be broke off, that due attendance may be given to our charge; and give place to the Cares, and Labours, and Vigilance, and many Incidental Perplexities and Troubles of the Pastoral Office.

Mark 10.
44.

He that will be chief among you, says the great Shepherd to his substitutes, shall be the Servant of all, even as the Son of Man came not to be Ministered unto, but to Minister, and to give his Life a Ransom for many. When therefore, we lift up our Eyes and

con-

consider what numbers, and it may be multitudes our Great Master hath committed to our Care, and Inspection, and of whom we must give an account; when we consider their Spiritual Necessities and Dangers, and see them coming to us for Succour and Relief, or it may be for the most part wandring *as Sheep without a Shepherd*, hasting with all the speed they can to Ruine: How should our Bowels Yern over them, and our utmost diligence be excited to seek and reduce the one, and preserve and nourish the other; to heal the Sick and bind up the Broken-hearted, and reprove and correct as there is just occasion, and by degrees instruct them in the whole Will of God, and train them up to his Heavenly Kingdom!

How should our best endeavours be engaged in this most excellent work, and how should we give our selves wholly to it; losing no opportunity of doing good, how unseasonable soever it may be as to our own ease and quiet, and whatever interruptions it may give to the sweet employments of our beloved Privacy; for *this* is our main business, and all things else must be subservient to it. And when we have done our best,

our Service will be greatly imperfect, and our Accounts stand in need of a very merciful eye, *for who is sufficient for these things!*

The Pastoral Office in the Church of Christ, what ever appearance it may have of ease to those who know not what it is; is yet really, the most careful, most difficult, and laborious Profession in the World: And 'tis surrounded too with such great discouragements as nothing could Enable us to bear up against but the Applauses of a Good Conscience, the Satisfaction there is in a Sincere *endeavour* to do Good, whatever the Success may be, and the Prospect of that Glorious Crown, which Jesus hath Prepared for his faithful Servants above.

1 Tim. 5
17.

What great reason therefore have the flock to *count them worthy of double Honour, who thus Labour in the Word and Doctrine*, and spend their Lives in a careful Watching for their Souls, that they may keep them safe to the Day of Recompence, and then present them *acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ*. And how are they oblig'd by all the ties of Gratitude and Duty, both to God and them, and for their own sakes too; to sweeten their Labours by Observing their Pious Advices

Advices and Complying with their Government (which indeed is not theirs but Christ's) to each others mutual Comfort in this World, and eternal Rejoycing in Heaven.

Now when it was evening, and the Day far gone in wondrous Works of Mercy and Heavenly Instruction; the Disciples in a kind concern for the People, who were tir'd and faint when they first came to Jesus, and no doubt much more so now the *Day began to wear away*; and in a Due Regard too of their Masters Health, who they might well believe was even quite spent at the end of so Toilsom a Day, who was little less at the beginning of it, and had taken no Refreshment: *the Disciples came to him saying, Matt. 14. This is a Desert Place, and the time is now far pa's'd, send the Multitudes away that they Mar. 6.35. may go into the Villages and Lodge, and buy Luk. 9.12. themselves Victuals for they have nothing to Eat.*

How warm was the Zeal of these People who followed Jesus so far from their homes on foot, to a Place where was no Entertainment, a barren Wilderness, without bringing any Provision with them, or taking thought for any when the evening drew on, so that 'twas need-
ful

ful for the Disciples to desire our Lord to send them away into the Neighbouring Towns! as when he fed the *four thousand*, 'tis said that they too had been *with him three Days*, and that *divers of*
 Mar. 8. 2, 3. *them came from far.*

But a true Affection overlooks all difficulties, and bears the greatest Inconveniences with uncommon Patience. And did our Devotion now bear any proportion to what was so remarkable in the first times of Christianity, we should not be so cool and indifferent as we are in waiting on our Saviour in his publick ordinances: Which, though not attended indeed with *Miraculous powers*, there being now no need that they should be so, nor perform'd by Jesus in Person, *whom the Heavens must contain till the Re-stitution of all things*, and who is solliciting our cause with God above; yet are impress'd with his divine Authority, and Honour'd with his more especial Presence, and will not fail of his Blessing, unless we are very much failing in the sincerity of our duty.

Not that a continual rambling after Sermons, to the neglect of making Provision for our selves and Families, is now a days warrantable from the Zeal of these
 People;

People ; for the occasion here was extraordinary, and Jesus then was but beginning to gather a Church, and demonstrate himself to be the *Messiah*, and his Heavenly discourses, attended with such beneficial Miracles, could not but charm their attendance, even to a forgetfulness of every thing else, and were design'd for that purpose, that they might have a strong inducement to Believe.

But now that the Church is settled, and there is a fixed Ministry, the case is very much alter'd ; and that which was highly commendable then, is now a very great fault. And St. Paul does adjudge it to be so, *For the time will come, says he, that they will not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own Lusts shall they heap to themselves Teachers, having Itching Ears ; and they shall turn away their Ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables :*

And chargeth Timothy to rebuke and reprove it. *2 Tim. 4. 2, 3, 4.* And when

he exhorts the Romans to be *Fervent in Spirit, and to continue Instant in Prayer ;*

he at the same time charges them *not to be slothful in Business ;* to prevent, no doubt, their being carried away too far by an imprudent Zeal, and lest under pretence of giving themselves up wholly

to

to Religion, they and their Families should come to beggery by Idleness and Sloth.

Matt. 6.
33.

But thus far we may and ought to imitate their Zeal, that is, in a devout and constant attendance upon the publick ministrations at the times fix'd by Authority in the Churches to which we belong, laying aside when we are there all secular thoughts and Worldly cares, and fearing no ill consequences of a regular Religion; always making it our great principle of Action, *first to seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, and then to trust his Providence with all other things, when with a moderate industry we have done our part.

And when, with so much convenience and ease as now, we may approach our Saviour at the times and places set apart for his Service, and have liberty to make known our wants to him, and hear his blessed Words, though not from his own mouth, yet faithfully transmitted to us by those that heard them, and have a true relation of his wondrous Works from those that saw them wrought, and be instructed in his Holy Doctrine by such as he hath commission'd for that purpose; 'tis too too great an Argument of want of Faith, Devotion, and Love, when

when every trifle will keep us from our Religious assemblies, and we presently grow heavy and tir'd when we are there, and think long till the service is over. But to proceed —

Upon the Apostles desire that Jesus would dismiss the Multitude, he said unto them, *They need not depart, give ye them to eat.* Now this must needs look very strange to them who knew how slenderly they were Provided; and though our Lord seem'd by his question to *Philip*, *Whence shall we buy Bread that these may Eat?* To intend to send for Food for them to the Neighbouring Towns, and apply'd himself particularly to *Philip* who was a Native of those Parts, as one that could best direct him where to have it; yet this was only to try *Philip's* Faith, and make him more sensible of the greatness of the Miracle he design'd to Work, who, as *St. Chrysostome* says, was more rude and ignorant and inapprehensive than the rest. And this he said to prove him, says the Text, *For he himself knew what he would do.*

For when *Philip* had told him that *Two Hundred perry-worth of Bread was not sufficient that every one might take a little*, he says no more of buying, but asks his Disciples, *How many Loaves have ye?* And
Andrew

Andrew told Jesus what their poor stock was, There is a Lad here, says he, which hath five Barley Loaves and two Small Fishes, but what are they among so many?

Now from this passage we may first observe, What course and scanty fare, our Saviour was content with when he dwelt among us; no better than his mean Disciples used to feed on, when following their Laborious Calling, a little harsh Barley Bread, and Dried Fish; which was only design'd to satisfy the *Necessities* of Nature, not its Wanton Cravings, and would go down when the Appetite was Sharpened by Hunger, the only inducement to his Meals, and which were many times put by when an opportunity came in his way of shewing Mercy.

Sometimes indeed we find him at more plentiful Entertainments, (which shews the Lawfulness, now and then, of exceeding,) but 'tis but seldom, and in order to some Holy Purposes, more out of Charity to the Invited than to gratify himself; for when at his own providing, we see his Diet was the meanest and plainest that could be.

And how does this reprove the Luxury and Intemperance of too many Christians, whose God is their Belly, and their main study

study to Cram and Pamper a Perishing Carcass with the most artful and costly Gluttony! the *Excesses* of whose every Meal would plentifully relieve the Necessities of many their Poor Neighbours, that are ready to Perish with Hunger!

How strangely unlike are the Disciples to their Master! How Temperate and Abstemious he, and how Luxurious they! How much did he neglect himself that he might be a common Friend to Mankind; while we on the direct contrary, are wholly intent upon indulging and humouring, and as we call it *enjoying* our selves, with very little regard to any Body else! But 'tis an unchristian, and even inhumane sort of enjoyment, which arises from a wasteful expence of God's good Creatures, to gratifie a forced Appetite of our own even to a Nauseate and a Surfeit; when we can't but know so many round about us, at the same time groaning under the Miseries of want.

One would wonder how People of any Bowels could at this rate enjoy themselves at all; but this is indeed to put off all Humanity, and to have Hearts as hard and insensible as an Adamant, 'Tis like sporting and carousing at Executions, or which is rather worse, and but the

the very truth, 'tis tantalizing those about us whose Appetite poverty has set to the keenest edge, with the noise of great doings and providings, and with the sight and even smell of it too, and yet not suffering them either to touch or taste, but to languish under the inexpres- sible pains of fruitless longings and a dis- appointed hunger.

Such a thought as this methinks should be enough to spoil the relish of the high- est Cookery, and richest Wines, where Charity is wanting; and the sharper our own Stomachs are, the more feeling sense shall we have of the ~~Important~~ Cravings of a Poor Mans Hungry Belly, which he knows not where to satisfy.

But such thoughts as these, your Epi- cures industriously avoid, as an unsea- sonable damp to their pleasures, and ha- ving shut out all such ungrateful prospects, they look no further than an unlimited gratification of their own unnatural Ap- petites: which yet can never be satisfied with all their various and expensive Art; for all that Excess and Luxury are good for, is only to cloy and surfeit, but *satis- faction* is quite another thing.

And when all's done, there's no en- joyment like that which springs from
works

works of Mercy and Compassion: when the Blessing of those that are ready to Perish Job 29.13. comes upon us, and we give new Life and Vigour to the Hungry and Thirsty, when their Soul faints within them and they cry to us in their Distress. How will this fill a generous breast with infinite delight, and make him praise and bless his Divine Benefactor, who hath enabled him to be thus like himself in doing good to Mankind!

He that is of a truly Christian Spirit, will not think much to deny himself many even *innocent gratifications* that he may be the more capable of relieving other Men's *Necessities*; and if his quality and estate, and station in the World, oblige him to keep a constant well-spread Table, and sometimes to exceed his usual measures, though he may do this lawfully, and enjoy a share of it himself with moderation and due thankfulness to God; yet the Poor must by no means be forgotten, for all the Feasts of Christians should be Feasts of Charity.

But where great entertainments are made only for state and shew, to vye with our rich neighbours, and pamper those that have rather need of abstinence, and that so often and with such great ex-

P

pence

pence as disables us not only from being Charitable but even Just; 'tis directly contrary to our Saviour's plain express command which we have, *Luke 14. 12.* Where, being invited to dine with one of the chief *Pharisees*, though he went (and we don't find that he ever refused such invitations) yet thus he said to him that bade him, and which no doubt equally concerns us all: *When thou makest a Dinner or a Supper, call not thy Friends, nor thy Brethren, nor thy Kinsmen, nor thy Rich Neighbours, lest they bid thee again and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a Feast call the Poor and the Maimed, the Lame and the Blind, and thou shalt be Blessed; for they cannot recompence thee, but thou shalt be recompenced at the Resurrection of the Just.*

Now though 'tis true, that all kind invitations of those of ones own Rank, and Neighbourhood, and Relation, to a Meal of Plenty now and then, are not here forbidden, for this would destroy all Friendly Correspondence, and be contrary to the Genius of Christianity, and Christ himself did often countenance such entertainments with his Holy Presence; yet, when People make a constant trade of Junketing, and every thing is done with

A mu-

Æmulation and an extravagant Expence, without any regard to the Necessitous, and that due relief of the Poor which is the only true Hospitality; this is that which our Saviour here condemns, and indeed it deserves the sharpest Censure.

And for our encouragement to a greater tenderness for those that are in want, and sometimes to make provision on purpose for them; he tells us, that instead of the paltry recompence of one good Dinner for another, which is all that our other treatments shall have, they that Feast the Poor shall have a reward from God himself at the Great Day of Retribution. When they shall be placed at the right hand of the King of Glory, the Great Judge of Quick and Dead, and hear these ravishing Words, *Come ye blessed of my Father, Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World; for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink; a stranger, and ye took me in, &c. for in as much as ye did it to the least of my Brethren, ye did it unto me. Matt. 25. 34, &c.*

But how great was the wonder and expectation, both of the Disciples and the Multitude, when at Jesus's command they were placed upon the grass by fifty

in a Company, and the Loaves and Fishes brought to him?

The multitude, we may well suppose, at first knew nothing of the meaning of this, and were full of enquiry for what purpose it should be; and the Disciples could not but be as full of thought, whilst they were marshalling this Army into equal ranks, in order to their being fed with five Loaves and two little Fishes.

But Jesus had already won so much upon the People by his admirable Discourses, and wondrous Cures, that they readily did as they were Order'd, being well assur'd that something extraordinary would follow; and the Disciples knew so much of the Divine Power of their Master, that how unlikely soever his present undertaking might appear, they did not doubt but he could effect it if he pleas'd, and were as diligent in disposing of the numerous guests as if they saw with their Eyes Provision enough and to spare.

But why was the Multitude made to sit down *by Fifty in a Company*? I suppose the reason was (not to search for Mysteries where none perhaps were intended) that no Man might be miss'd in the distribution, but every one share in the Miraculous repast: whereas in the confus'd

fus'd crowd, some would have been serv'd over and over it may be, and others have had nothing; which might have been made an objection against the *Truth*, or at least the *Greatness* of the Miracle.

This our all-wise Saviour fore-saw, and took this method which would effectually prevent all manner of objection in the case; for an orderly disposal of the People sitting upon the ground in such small and distinct Companies, made it easie for the Apostles to give to every Man an equal share, and every one could then be witness of his Neighbours eating, and all join in the Praises of their glorious benefactor.

And from hence we may learn that Prudence and Discretion is highly needful in the distribution of our Alms; and a promiscuous random charity, that is thrown at a venture amongst the multitude of Poor that flock about us, is very likely to be often bestow'd where it should not be, and not to be bestow'd where it should: and a more regular way of Proceeding by some stated method, to which for the most part we should keep, would be abundantly more for the good of those Poor that best deserve our help, and consequently tend very much to our own satisfaction,

the Publick Benefit, and the Praise and Glory of God.

Now when every one was thus seated, to the number of *five thousand*, full of Wonder, as was said, and Expectation ;
 Luk. 9. 16. *Jesus took the five Loaves and the two Fishes into his Omnipotent hands, and looking up to Heaven he blessed them, and brake, and*
 — 17. *gave to the Disciples, and the Disciples to the Multitude, and they did all eat as much as they would and were filled.*

Good God, what a sight was here ! To see the Disciples distributing both Bread and Fish from Company to Company to such vast numbers, resorting continually to Jesus for a new supply, and never failing of it till all were satisfied ; and all this out of five Loaves and two small Fishes, which thus multiply'd insensibly to a Plentiful meal for so many thousand hungry Men, besides Women and Children which no doubt were very nutherous too ! How amazing was it ; how did it demonstrate beyond all exception that Jesus was endow'd with the great Power of God, and force Men to confess that he
 Joh. 6. 14. *was of a Truth that Prophet which should come into the World !*

For what Power less than that which
 Gen. 1. 11. *at first blessed the Earth, and the Herb*
 yielding

yielding seed, and made it fruitful to the increase of an hundred fold, and said, *Let the Waters bring forth abundantly, and the fish multiply so as to fill the Waters in the Seas*; what less than that *Creating Power*, what Blessing less than that of God upon the new form'd World, could be sufficient to effect so wondrous an increase as this!

Let no Man therefore, who is a sincere follower of Jesus, ever distrust his peculiar Care and Providence, or be over much concern'd even in the straitest and most difficult Circumstances, with a numerous Family suppose, many hungry mouths to fill, and very little to do it with, a daily Increase of charge, but not of wherewithal to maintain it; but let him call to mind this Miracle of the *Loaves*, and with a lively Faith and intire Confidence put his trust in him, *who feedeth the Hungry, and when he opens his hand satisfieth every living thing with plenty.* *Trust in the Lord and be doing good,* says David, *so shalt thou dwell in the Land and verily thou shalt be fed.*

Has he not often shewn his Power in supporting his People, and that in such a manner that 'twas evident it was his doing? Nay, does he not usually make

choice of the seemingly most unlikely methods whereby to do it, that the force of natural and second causes being wholly shut out, all the glory may be given to the God of nature, and Men be inclin'd in all their exigencies, intirely to depend upon him?

But then, it must be in a course of sincere Religion, we must *be doing good*, not ruining our selves by Sloth or Vice, for then to expect extraordinary helps, is not Faith, but the greatest Presumption. Where there is a real necessity, not brought upon our selves by our own folly and Wickedness, and we humbly rely upon God for support, and beg it by earnest Prayer, and conscientiously Perform the duties of our station, and make use of no ill Arts to better our circumstances; we may be sure Providence will some way or other interpose for our relief; for though Miracles are ceas'd, yet Providence is not; Gods Mercy and Compassion is still the same, and so is his Power too, and are as effectually shewn as ever in the care that he takes of his Servants, though not with such *Amazing* Circumstances as sometimes in the days of old; but yet not without marks sufficient to evince that it was Providence and nothing else.

Christ

Christ tells us that our *Heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things*, that is of meat and drink and rayment, and cannot subsist without them; and he that provides a maintenance for the *Fowls of the Air* and all other inferiour Creatures, to be sure will not neglect us who *are much better than they*, only the proportion we must leave to him, (and 'tis but fit we should) who is the best judge of what is most expedient for us; and though it be but *a little that the righteous hath*, yet says the Psalmist, *'tis better than great riches of the ungodly*. The reason is plain, *because the arms of the wicked shall be broken but the Lord upholdeth the righteous*. Matt 6.25, &c.
Psa. 37.16, 17.

His Blessing is the best support, for nothing can prosper without it; and with it, even a little will either increase to a Miracle, as here the Loaves and Fishes did; or if not so, yet it shall be Preserv'd from growing less, and still continue to be a competency, and even *in the evil time, and in the Days of scarcity and Dearth*, that little shall be enough; as was the Widow of Sarepta's handful of Meal and a little Oil in a cruise. And he that is satisfied though it be with little, is far more happy than he that is uneasie and discontented in the midst of abundance. Psa. 37.19.
1 King. 17. 16.

For

For nothing upon Earth, even all the enjoyments of it crowded together, is able to fill the immense capacity of the Soul of Man; after all, content must supply the defects, 'tis that only which replenishes the mind with Peace and Satisfaction, and makes it be at rest; and where God gives that Blessing, he gives the Perfection of this Worlds happiness!

So that the Blessing of God is *all* in all; 'tis that which makes Men truly Rich and Happy; and whether it be by Multiplying small beginnings into great abundance, or by giving us contentment with a little, 'tis all one in the conclusion. And every sincere good Christian may say with the Prophet *Habakkuk*, *Although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines; though the labour of the Olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no Meat; though the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:*

Hab. 3. 17.
18.

yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation. And this, in full assurance that the Divine Favour and Blessing, will some way or other supply the want of all things.

Mar. 6. 41.

Let us therefore, with our Saviour, lift up our eyes to that glorious Being from whom comes every good and perfect Gift,

Gift, returning our most hearty Thanks and Praise for even a mean and scanty fortune, as being more than we deserve who are *less than the least of his Mercies*, and which his Providence can soon enlarge whenever he thinks fit. And when he does so, and makes us so happy as to be able to *shew Mercy* to those that are in need, let us do it with cheerfulness according to the Ability which our Great Lord hath given us, being *rich in good works*, glad to distribute, willing to communicate, as good Stewards of the manifold favours of God; always remembering who made us to differ, and referring all to his Glory, as Jesus did when he looked up to Heaven before he so Miraculously Fed the Multitudes, by no means arrogating any thing to our dependent selves, but transmitting all the Praise directly up to God.

1 Tim. 6.
18.
1 Pet. 4.
10.

And in the distribution of our Charity to those that are due objects of it, let not a distrustful fear of reducing our selves to want, make us draw back our hand from doing good; for no discreet Almsgiver ever came off a loser even here in this World.

There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, says Solomon, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it turneth to poverty.
The

PROV. 11. *The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he*
 24, 25. *that watereth shall be watered also himself.*
For he that hath pity upon the Poor, lendeth
 19.—17. *unto the Lord; and that which he hath given*
will he pay him again, and that with vast
increase.

Behold your Saviour in the desert breaking the five Barly Loaves and two small Fishes (which was all that he had for his own and his Disciples refreshment) and behold the Disciples cheerfully distributing what he had broken to great numbers of needy Hungry Creatures, and think how they rejoyced in the plentiful repast; and then see the Blessing of God upon the Works of Mercy, the more they gave, the more they had still to give, and that which at first seemed scarcely enough for themselves, increased so prodigiously in the very act of distribution, that five thousand Men were fully satisfied with it, besides Women and Children, and much more left at last than was at the beginning.

For when they were filled, Jesus said unto his Disciples, *gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost. And they gathered them together, and filled twelve Baskets with that which remained over and above unto them that had eaten; which still enabled them for a further Charity.* And

And so shall we find it too, if we have but the Faith to try. That is, we also shall experience the Blessing that attends true Charity, if we dare but trust God so far upon his word and promise, which he hath over and over repeated, as liberally to Minister to the wants of the poor and needy. Our Saviour says very plainly, *Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over into your Bosom.* For, as the Apostle reasons, *God is able to make all grace to abound towards you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.* How many words of constant plenty are here put together, to an almost unlimited power of doing good! Here is *all-sufficiency*, and that *always*, and in *all things*, to a capacity of *abounding*, and that in *every good work*; and all this as the reward of a free distribution to those that are in want.

What great encouragement is here to Works of Mercy, not only to our power, but even beyond it, in some extraordinary and pressing cases! Not that the prime inducement should be this, for he that makes a Merchandice of Charity does it for his own sake only, not out of Love and Obedience to God, and Compassion

to

to the Poor; and therefore shall lose his reward. But when we find our selves cool and backward to this great duty for fear of bringing Poverty upon our selves by being too open handed to others, which is the usual great hindrance of liberal Alms-giving; we should excite and prick our selves on with this consideration, That thus we shall reap if we faint not.

Galat. 6.9.

'Tis true indeed, we must be just as well as merciful; Just to our Families in providing for their comfortable subsistence, and Just to those we deal with in any way of business, by rendring to every one his due: and he that by his indiscreet Charity beyond what his circumstances will reasonably afford, makes himself incapable of discharging those other obligations, and then expects a miraculous supply; presumptuously tempts God, and is without all natural compassion, and ruins many, even those that are nearest to him, by giving too much to some.

But there are very few that come near to this extream, and Prudence will direct to a *medium* between a too lavish, and too strait-lac'd charity; and Faith will rid us of all discouraging apprehensions of any ill consequence from a liberal and

and sometimes extraordinary beneficence, upon an extraordinary occasion: And whenever it comes to the question, how far we shall Proceed, the proportion should rather exceed than fall short of our Ability, for God will make us amends.

And would we but observe what our Lord here commanded his Disciples, and *gather up the fragments that remain*, after our own wants are reasonably satisfied, *that nothing be lost*; there's few Mens ability of relieving the necessitous but would be greater than it is.

Good husbandry is never more commendable than when in order to so excellent an end as this; (*viz.*) that we may have the more to give to those that want. And 'tis a great aggravation of the sins of Extravagance and Prodigality, that *that* is wasted in excess and riot, which would cheer up the Spirits of those that are sinking under a desperate Poverty, and make the Fatherless and *Widows hearts* Job 29.13: *to sing for joy.*

'Tis too well known that very much is daily squandred away in Vice and Vanity, and that not only by People of great Estates and Quality, but by such as upon all accounts have need enough to make the most of every thing; and for want

want of a due regard to what we call *little matters*, many a fair fortune grows scanty and uneasie, and soon dwindles into nothing.

Upon this account it is, that some People are always in straits who yet have plentiful incomes, and are guilty of no wasting Vices, but are ruin'd they don't know how; only for want of Prudent management, and through a slothful carelessness in their affairs whereby they undiscernably slide downwards beyond recovery. So true is that observation of the wise Son of *Sirach*, *Ecclesiast.* 19. 1. *He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.*

Now, when Men have brought themselves into such circumstances, no wonder if they have no charity for others, who are at their wits end how to get a supply for their own necessities, and find enough to do to keep themselves above water. And yet enquire into the matter, you'll find a good Estate, a quick Trade, or a full employment, and probability of living very comfortably, and yet of having sufficient after all for a liberal charity to the Poor.

Others that have less can do it, and why not they? But excess and heedlessness

ness will ruine any thing : And he that will follow an extravagant humour, without any thought, as far as it will lead him, will sooner become an object of charity himself than able to give relief to those that are so.

I don't at all question, but very many Families with a moderate care, and that Modesty and Sobriety which becomes Christians, might live at much less expence than they do, and yet really enjoy more, and in as creditable a way too ; and then, were that bestowed in charity which by this means would be redeem'd from Luxury and ill-husbandry, 'twould be an abundant Provision for all that are really necessitous amongst us.

What a reproach then is it to a Disciple of the compassionate Jesus, when God has enabled him to do much good, even with the *fragments* of his fortune which would remain to him after all his own wants were Plentifully supply'd in Moderation ; basely to forget all gratitude to God, and lay aside all pity to his Brethren, and by a wicked extravagance, or a supine negligence in his concerns, make himself utterly incapable of doing any thing !

Q

What

What is consum'd at this vile unprofitable rate, is perfectly *lost* indeed; and will turn to no account but of *weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth*, when the sad Sentence shall be pass'd, *Depart ye Cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels, for I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, &c.*

Matt. 25.

'Tis very melancholy to consider how many will then be involv'd in this dreadful Condemnation, who here were in no apprehension of it, at least upon *that* account; because they were not in a *capacity* of being charitable. But who brought them into that incapacity? If God, 'tis another case, but if they brought it upon themselves by their *Excess* and *Folly*; the guilt of not doing that good they might have done, with the *Talents* which God at first committed to their trust for that purpose, will lie upon their Souls for ever. *Take ye the unprofitable Servant,* says our Lord, *and cast him into utter darkness.*

Matt. 25.
90.

Since therefore, we are but Stewards under God of these worldly Possessions for the good of the Household, and to supply our fellow Servants wants as there is occasion, according to our several Abilities and Trusts, and of which we must
one

one Day be called to give an Account; it becomes us to be Prudent and Faithful. Not to be lavish of what is not our own, nor to pamper our selves to the neglect of those under our charge, and then think to come off by Pleading inability; but as wise and good Stewards, frequently to have our eye upon our future reckoning, and to be modest and frugal in our own expences, and careful that nothing be lost, which may enable us to do still more good, having a tender regard and open hand to those whom 'tis our duty to support in their necessities. And so shall we, after a Life of Comfort and Satisfaction here, at last hear the Happy *Euge, Well done, Good and Faithful servants, enter ye into the Joy of your Lord.*

Amen, blessed Jesus, Amen!

Q 2

The

The Ninth Miracle.

Jesus walking upon the troubled Sea.

MATTH. XIV. 22, &c.

And straightway Jesus constrain'd his Disciples to get into a Ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the Multitudes away.

And when he had sent the Multitudes away, he went up into a Mountain apart to Pray; and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the Ship was now in the midst of the Sea tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the Sea, &c.

After Jesus had wrought the amazing Miracle of feeding five Thousand Men besides Women and Children, with five loaves and two small fishes; the People that saw it were so affected with it, that they assuredly concluded *he was that*

that Prophet that should come into the World, Joh. 6.14. that is, the Christ or Messias who was then generally expected, and accordingly, were resolv'd to Proclaim him their King, 15. — and constrain him to be their leader and to fight their battles, in order to the restoring them to their former Glory: and which, he that could work such a Miracle must needs be able to bring to pass! and with the least Provision maintain the greatest Army, and Command victory wherever he went.

But when Jesus perceiv'd this design of theirs, which was very disagreeable to the end of his coming, and the nature of his Kingdom, (which was not to be of *this* World,) he perswaded them to desist for Joh. 18. 36. that time, and betake themselves to their several Homes; and then, having order'd his Disciples likewise to leave him, and go before to the other side of the lake, he withdrew to his usual retreat in the Mountains, and betook himself in solitude to his devotions in which he spent that night.

Now from this Passage we may take Notice once for all of that Excellent Mixture of the Active and Contemplative Life which is so Remarkable in all our Saviours Conversation; and which every

Christian, in some Measure, ought to Imitate.

Our Lords Business in the World was of such a Nature that nothing could be more Publick; 'twas to seek and to save the Lost Race of Mankind, to Enlighten their Benighted Minds with Heavenly Doctrine, and teach them the way to Everlasting Happiness: To Rescue them from that Deplorable Bondage they were in, to the Powers and the Works of Darkness, and that endless Misery, which without his Succour, would Inevitably have been their sad Portion at Last in Hell.

And in Order to this equally Great and Good Work, which none could Effect but he, we find he made choice of an Ambulatory sort of Life, and fix'd no where after he had begun his Publick Ministry; but from Place to Place continually *went about doing Good*, as being the common Friend of all Men, the Great Light of the World, and therefore shedding his Blessed Influences every where alike, *Conversing with Gentiles as well as Jews, Publicans and Sinners as well as Scribes and Pharisees*, Preaching the Gospel to the Poor as well as to the Rich, and bestowing Miracles of Mercy equally upon

upon all that were not Rendred Incapable of them, by Hypocrisy and Unbelief.

But notwithstanding so full an Employment, and such an Active and unsettled way of Living, he not only duly frequented the Publick service of the Synagogue and the Temple, but would often Lose himself in the Solitudes of Mountains and Deserts; spending many Hours in Private Intercourse with Heaven by Meditation and Prayer, and when the hurries of the Day would not afford him Leisure for it, He would borrow from the Night: And then Return again to his Labours of Love with an unweary'd Diligence, that he might Compleat the stupendous works which his Father had given him to Finish.

Joh. 5. 36.

And so, Should it be with us. The most Busy calling is no Just excuse for the neglect of our Devotions; We ought and we may find time both to attend upon the Publick Offices of the Church, and likewise to Retire in Private to Meditate and Pray, and Compose our thoughts into a Religious and Heavenly Frame, and yet mind our Business too. Before we Enter upon the Employments of the Day, our times our own, as it is also when we have finish'd them

Believe

Q 4

at

at Night, and therefore 'tis but then Abridg-
ing our selves of a Little sleep, tho it be
but one Hour at a Time, and we may
have Competent Leisure, let our Calling
be never so Busy, to Commune with our
Hearts, and think upon God, and Breathe
a few Sighs towards our Country Above;
and even this Little will keep up so Live-
ly a Sense of the great things Relating
to our Future state, as will Preserve us
from being much Corrupted in our Pas-
sage to it. And that sort of Business which
will not allow such short Intervals as
these, or such an Over-eager way of fol-
lowing it as jades a Man's Spirits to that
Degree as to make him fit for nothing
but his Bed at Night, and then in the
Morning hurries him away again into
the Crowds, and Bustles of the World be-
fore he is well awake; such a Life as this
is no better than that of a Beast of Bur-
then, and will be of Dismal Consequence
at Last.

But those that are more Disengag'd,
and have either no Constant settled Em-
ployment, or such as gives them more
Command of their Time, and admits of
a frequent Relaxation, are oblig'd to much
more than this; and whoever is really
Sensible of the great end of Living, and
Believes

Believes that an Eternal Life will succeed this short one here, in which if he is not Infinitely happy, he must be extremely Miserable to endless Ages; will be glad of all opportunities, and *make* as many as he can, of Recess from Noise, and Vanity, and Vexation, that with a Calm and Quiet Mind he may think of his long home to which he is Travelling a pace, and consider whether his steps are Right or not, and form such Resolutions as his Case Requires, and be earnest with God in Prayer for his Direction and Assistance.

And that this may be done to the Purpose, sufficient Time must be afforded to unload our Souls by Degrees of secular Cares and Encumbrances (which lie so close, and stick so fast, that 'tis not to be expected we should be free from them in a Moment) that so our Minds being clear and undivided, we may be able to pursue a good thought home, with Vigour and Intention. For otherwise, we shall always be *Beginning* to Retire and think, but make no Progress; and no Wonder if we are but very little the better for such broken Interrupted Meditations as are ended as soon as begun, and were never begun as they should be.

And

And when a Mans circumstances are unavoidably such, as that he can seldom be Private and still in the Day Time, he should make himself amends sometimes with the Solitude and silence of the Night. And if the Evening of the Lords Day were by such Persons now and then set a part for this holy use, and a good part of the Ensuing Night spent in a Devout Intercourse with God, and Examination of the condition of their Souls, 'twould be of great Advantage to them; And a serious attendance upon the Publick Service of the Church, would be an excellent Preparative to those Religious Exercises, which they should afterwards Perform in Private.

'Tis true, our Constitution must be first Consulted, and every Man is bound not to destroy his Health, and that for the sake of his Religion too, which will go on very heavily without it. But few Mens Constitutions are so extremely Weak, as not once in a while to be able to bear being broke of part of a Nights Rest; and I believe we should run the venture of a little Indisposition for the Sake of some Worldly Advantage; and try, and try again, to bring our selves to a more wakeful Habit: Or were it only to Gra-
tify

tify some Humour of our own in the matter of Diversion and Sport, I'm apt to think we should make but little difficulty of it. But to sit up beyond ones Hour upon account of *Devotion, to watch unto Prayer* and Meditation, this is a dull heavy thing indeed; and a great many excuses will be made, when the true Reason is, *We have no mind to it*, and we Regard business and Pleasure more than our Salvation. He indeed, that really can't bear such Night-watches upon *any* Account, will not be oblig'd to bear them upon account of Religion; but then, one of so weakly a Constitution as this, will be as little fit for the constant hurries and Fatigues of business, or for immoderate and unseasonable Pleasures; and consequently may find sufficient Leisure in the day time to retire and apply himself to the *one thing needful*, and then there will be no need of sitting up at Night.

But, he that is so hail and strong as to be able to drudge for the World all the Day, is no doubt able, and not a little oblig'd, sometimes to Dedicate at least *Part* of a Night to Contemplation and Devotion: that is, supposing he can't otherwise meet with an opportunity, or very rarely, of sufficient quiet and Retirement.

tirement for the due performance of those equally necessary and delightful Duties.

But, as the most Active busy Men, must thus find Leisure sometimes for Religious Solitude, the Advantages of which are so very great, that whoever is a Christian indeed, will contrive by some means or other often to enjoy it; so on the other Hand, No Man must neglect the proper business of his Calling upon pretence of being Intirely engag'd in the Contemplative Life, and conversing only with God and his own thoughts in Solitary Recesses from the World.

For no Man is Born for himself only, but is oblig'd to contribute what he can to the good and happiness of Society, in that Station wherein Gods Providence hath plac'd him; and therefore the Retirements of a Christian should be such as those of our great Master were; that is, so order'd as to answer the excellent design of them upon our selves, without any hindrance to the good offices, we owe to others: by no means wholly to seclude our selves from Society, and become Lost and Dead to the Rest of Mankind, but only so as to render our selves still more capable of Promoting the Common Interest, when we appear again Abroad. Now

Now whilst *Jesus* was conversing with his Heavenly Father in Prayer in the Mountain, his Disciples were toss'd by a Tempest on the Sea, and forc'd to be-take themselves to their Oars, and ply them hard, because *the Wind was contrary*: And the darkness of the Night adding to the Horror of the storm, as it made their danger greater, so it gave them a more Terrifying Sense of it, and they were the more afraid, no doubt, because their Divine Master was absent; who, had he been there, they knew by a late happy Experience, could quiet the Winds 8. Matt 26. and Waters with his Word.

This Storm, (as that other mention'd *Matt. 8. 26.* which, together with the Miracle that ensu'd each of them, being so much alike in the Main Circumstances, we shall consider together) was a Lively Emblem of the future Troubles of the Church; those Tempestuous Times of Persecution which in several Ages should Exercise all her skill and Courage, continually threaten her with Ruine, Try her Faith and Constancy with various terrors, and bring her to the Last extremity.

And thus it was with her during the three First Centuries; How many Furi-
ous

ous storms of Blood and Cruelty, no less than Ten, did then beat upon her from every Quarter! The united Force of Men and Devils was employ'd to sink her, and all things round about were Dismally dark and uncomfortable, and almost without Hope: And Jesus all the while seem'd either as *asleep* (as *Matt. 8 24.*) or else withdrawn, as here; Ignorant or Regardless of her Miseries, her Frights and Dangers, while her Enemies Insulted over her, as forsaken of her *Crucified God.*

And in some Measure it has been so with her in Divers Ages since; We of these Islands have had our Turn, and some of our near Neighbours now have theirs, and where next the storm will fall God only knows; and still Men will be tempted to conclude that Christ takes little notice of his Servants sufferings, since their Enemies Prosper, and they of *all Men are the most Miserable.*

BUT, as our Lord, tho' absent when his Disciples were Labouring in the storm, was Praying for them to his Heavenly Father that they might be safe till he should bring them help; So he never was, or will be unmindful of the Distresses of his Church, which he hath wonderfully
Demon-

Demonstrated to be dearer to him than his Life.

He Permits her indeed to be Exercis'd with severe Tryals, (and he told her before hand that it should be so,) that the sincerity of her Faith, and Love to him may be approv'd, when it shall appear to be *stronger than Death*, so that *Many* Cant. 8.
Waters can not Quench it, nor the most ^{6, 7.} enraged *Floods* of Persecution *Drown it*.

But withal he has assur'd her, not only of a Reward above, which shall Infinitely outweigh her heaviest Sufferings here; but of sufficient strength and Protection, to defend and bear her up in her most forlorn and hopeless Circumstances, till the time shall come of her Deliverance, provided she Reposeth her intire confidence in his Power and Goodness, and does her best endeavour to support her self.

Instead therefore of excessive Dejections and Fears when God shall please to lay Affliction upon his Church; Let us be assur'd, that Christ is so far from being Insensible of the Dangers we are in, that he is continually making Intercession for us above, and that thro' his Prayers we need not doubt of Succour. And tho' the Floods rise never so high, *and lift up their*

their Waves, and Rage horribly, and threaten to swallow us up, yet he that Dwelleth on high is mightier; and tho' not present visibly yet is always so by his Power and Providence, and in his own good time will bring Salvation.

And as he never ceases to Pray to God for us, so we must, then especially, most earnestly and Devoutly Pray to *him*; saying as the Disciples did in the other storm,
 Mat. 8.25. *Lord, save us; Master, Master, we Perish!*
 Luk. 8.24. We must beg that he would take us into his Almighty Protection, and by his Heavenly comforts make us sensible of his Divine presence with us, and that he'll *never leave us nor forsake us*, that he would Inspire us with new Resolution and Courage, and *supply what is lacking in our Faith*, and as our sorrows abound, make our Consolations to abound much more. So shall we be able to outride the fiercest storms, as that Noble Army of Martyrs and Confessors did of old, and be preserv'd from sinking in the Darkest and most Tempestuous Night till *Jesus* shall think fit to appear, and bring with him a calm.

And when his Churches danger is at the heighth, then is the proper Season for him to shew himself her Saviour; and that

that in such a manner as will most advance his Glory and increase her Joy.

As here, when the Disciples had been toiling all the night, and their Spirits were thereby exhausted, and their hopes at the lowest ebb, even ready to submit and give themselves over for lost; then Jesus hastened to put an end to their distress: and would not have suffered it to proceed so far, but that their rescue might be such as would demonstrate him to be God as well as Man.

For *while it was yet dark, in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them walking on the Sea*; the mighty billows fell flat as he came on, and were condens'd into a smooth firm path for their Creator; *The waters saw thee O God, the waters saw thee* Psa. 77. 16. *and were afraid!* and the fierce Winds durst not oppose *his* Passage, at whose Command they blow and must be silent, but awfully retir'd at his approach: and thus he advanc'd, treading upon the deep as securely as if it were dry land, till he drew nigh to the Ship, and heard their Cries, and saw their Toil, which, no doubt, moved his tender Heart to great Compassion.

But no sooner did they discern him moving towards them by the dawn of the
R Morning,

Matt. 14.
26.

Morning, which now began to give an imperfect light, but their fears were increas'd and turn'd into Affrightment; they indistinctly saw, a shape something like humane, glancing by their Vessel, and concluded it to be an evil Spirit, (which possibly they might think had rais'd that Storm, and now appeared as an ill omen of their approaching wreck,) and made a dismal out-cry, calling upon their absent Master, as if they were just sinking to the bottom. Upon this Jesus thought it high time to discover himself, *And straight-way spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.* His blessed voice they knew, and never heard it with more surprizing joy. Now they were satisfied 'twas no Infernal, Ill-baoding Apparition that they saw, but their dear Lord, whose absence they had bewail'd with heavy Hearts, and never hop'd to see again on this side Heaven. At his reviving Words their fears vanished apace, for who can be afraid, though in the greatest Perils, when Jesus is with him and cheers him up with his Divine refreshments?

But they must needs be full of Wonder and Amazement, to think how he came thither, and see him walking steadily

dily by the Ships side, on a rough tempestuous Sea. This was a Mercy so perfectly unexpected, and the manner of it so astonishing and above all humane possibility, that it could not but confound their thoughts and make them as the *Psalmist* expresses it, *like those that dream*, scarce able to believe that it was so; and yet without any just cause to question it, being so well acquainted with their Masters way of speaking, and hearing so plainly his most gracious Words, and as the light increas'd, seeing beyond all doubt that it was he indeed.

Now from hence we may learn never to limit God's Power to succour and relieve his Church even in the blackest, and, to all appearance, the most hopeless times, never to despair of his help and Protection how unlikely soever it may seem, and even impossible to the eye of Man: For Jesus is always able, and never fails to be ready to rescue her, when she hath been sufficiently try'd, and her danger is come to the heighth, and none can do it but he. When her Enemies begin to triumph over her as sure of her ruine, and say as those did, *Psal. 71. 11. God hath forsaken her, Persecute her, and take her, for there is none to deliver her*; then will he

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make

make bare his Almighty arm, and to the wonder and surprize of all Men, shew himself her faithful Guardian and Protector.

Nor is this true only of the Church of Christ in general, but of every particular Church that is a sound Member of it, and remains untouch'd in her fidelity to her divine head, and depends intirely upon his support, and in all her dangers flies to him for refuge.

For though the purest Churches in this militant State here on Earth, are so far from being exempt from ill treatment from the World, that they are rather *ap-*
 1 Thes. 3. *pointed thereunto*, and that upon many ac-
 3. counts, in which the glory of God, and the honour of our Holy Religion, and the good of Souls are very nearly concern'd; yet where Innocency of Life is added to Purity of Doctrine, and the passive virtues are duly exercis'd as there is occasion, and a Conscience void of Offence is preserv'd both towards God and Man; the Storm at length will cease unaccountably, and clear up into a greater tranquility than ever.

And when the afflictions of a Church are punitive, and by way of chastisement for her degeneracy from primitive Truth, and Zeal, and Purity, and Love;
 if

if she remembers from whence she is fallen, ^{Rev. 2. 4.} and repents, and does her first Works, she ^{5.} shall not have her Candlestick wholly remov'd out of its Place; and 'twas for want of such Repentance and Reformation, that any particular Church was ever ruin'd.

And as here, that which was the greatest affrightment of all to the Disciples, and look'd upon by them as a fore-runner of their certain Destruction, prov'd to be their Saviour; so 'tis not feldom, that those very things which we most dread, appear in the Conclusion, by the Over-ruling hand of Providence, to be the means of our Deliverance. Of this History affords us many memorable Instances, that of our own times not excepted; but I shall mention only one, which is that of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, when *Pharaoh* with all his Force pursued them to the red Sea; which hindering their march onwards, while he was ready behind to cut them in Pieces, or drive them back to a worse Slavery than ever, made them sore afraid, and they cried unto the Lord, ^{Exod. 14.} and murmur'd against *Moses*, and wish'd ^{10.} they had remain'd in *Egypt* still.

But *Moses* said, Fear ye not, stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord, and accordingly in a little time, those very wa-

ters which they thought would be the occasion of their ruine, became in a Miraculous manner the means of their safety, and the utter ruine of their Enemies.

So that, be the Church in general, or any part of it toss'd with never so furious Storms, and to all appearance in the utmost Jeopardy; let her but be *Zealous and Repent*, let her pray earnestly, live holily, and place her intire confidence in the Protection of Jesus, and he will appear in her behalf: and that in a way so peculiar to himself, that every one shall see and confess, that *with his own right hand, and with his holy Arm, he hath gotten himself the Victory.*

But whilst every one was full of silent Joy and Wonder at the so unexpected and astonishing Presence of Jesus; *Peter*, that forward, warm Disciple, being transported with his Masters so seasonable return, and thinking it may be, that he did not intend to come on Board the Ship (for *St. Mark* says *he made as if he would have passed by them*) and fearing, probably, that the storm would rage afresh when Jesus had left them, he thought he should be safest with his Almighty Lord, and said, *If it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the Water*, not doubting but he could enable him

him to do so. And when he was gone down out of the ship upon Jesus saying to him come, *He attempted to walk on the Water to go to him. But when he saw the Wind Boisterous, and perceiv'd the working of the Water under him, his Heart fail'd him, his former Frights return'd, and finding that he began to sink, he cryed out, saying, Lord save me! And Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of Little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

Now from hence we may observe, that as the best of Men, when in the disorder of a surprize, or under the Force of some violent Passion, may go too far in what they desire of God, and Presume beyond what the usual methods of his Providence will allow of, and thereby run themselves into needless Hazards and Difficulties, which without Gods great goodness would be of very fatal Consequence: So, when God Permits them so to do, it is that their Ill success may make them the more sensible of their own Weakness and Infirmary and his Power and Mercy; and give a check to that overforwardness and heat, which is so apt to carry them to what is very unwarrantable and full of Danger,

and teach them for the future to be zealous with Sobriety and Prudence.

Of this nature was that extravagant Desire of Martyrdom in many of the Primitive Church, when even Noyces in Christianity, and those of the weaker Sex must needs be thrusting themselves into the hands of the Persecutors, when they might easily and without Sin have escap'd them; and thereby expos'd themselves to such cruel Torments as they were not able to endure, and then did very Ill things to be free from them again, to the great Dishonour of their Holy Religion, the deep wounding of their Consciences, and their Lasting shame and Reproach, which they could not wipe off but by a long and very severe Repentance. Upon which account it was at length thought necessary to frame a Canon, by which it was order'd that those who should for the future run themselves into such Dangers when they might lawfully avoid them, should not, if they Perish'd in them, be numbred amongst the Martyrs of the Church.

60. Can.
Concil.
Elibert.

And indeed, 'tis no better than *knight-Errantry* in Religion, thus to seek out Hazardous Adventures, and Lead our selves into Temptation, and then expect
t hat

that God should support us, and bring us safely off. 'Tis not Faith, but Presumption that engages Men so far, for tho' nothing is more undaunted than true Faith, yet 'tis not so Fool-hardy as to Rush headlong into dangers without any Occasion or Reason. And those that are guilty of this Imprudent zeal, however good their Intention may be, for the sake of which *Jesus* may hear their cry when they are sinking in their Rash Attempts, and stretch forth his hand to hold them up, do yet Justly deserve a reproof for their Presumption, and that very Repri- mand too which *St. Peter* had, *O ye of Little Faith!*

For this sort of *Tempting God*, as our Matt. 4. 7. *Saviour* calls it, is always observ'd to be attended with great weakness of Faith. And where there is more of eagerness and sudden heat of Temper, than of Prudent Consideration and well-grounded Resolution, how can it be otherwise? But what need is there of any thing of this nature, and what Inclination should any of us have to it, had we but Faith enough to trust our Affairs in the hands of God and to wait his Leisure? But the truth is, we are apt to be dissatisfy'd with his tedious Methods, (as we think them) and slow way

way of Proceeding, and are afraid one thing or other will fall out Cross and disappoint our hopes of this or that which we have mightily set our Hearts upon, and conclude that now is the Time or never; and therefore Push on amain, and as 'twere quicken up Providence by some Extraordinary ways of our own Inventing, and are very Restless, and Importunate with Heaven to comply with our Desires, and think our selves undone if deny'd. All which as it is manifest *Presumption in us*, so it as plainly Argues great weakness in our Faith too, distrust and diffidence in a high Degree, as is always too Evident in the Conclusion.

Let us have a care therefore of the Intemperate heats of ungovern'd zeal, and never force any thing beyond the settled Rules of the Gospel, and the usual course of Providence, nor press on to what is out of our way and above our strength, nor Precipitate any thing by an over-hasty eagerness; but when Providence hath brought us into a state of Tryal, having humbly made our difficulties and necessities known unto God by Prayer, and form'd holy Resolutions, agreeable to our Present circumstances, and the Directions we meet with in Scripture, and beg'd our Lord to strengthen

strengthen and confirm them; 'twill then be our Wisdom calmly and sedately to wait till he shall please to be gracious to us and turn our heaviness into Joy.

And then we shall find that our Dangers will be less, and our comforts greater and more solid, and undisturb'd; our Innocence untouch'd, and our happyness upon all Accounts best secur'd, by the good old way of Faith and Patience, and a persevering Duty: till at last, all our present storms shall end in a Glorious and Everlasting calm.

Had *St. Peter* here, patiently expected Christ's coming into the Ship as the rest of the Disciples did, the Joy he felt at his Masters presence would have been uneclips'd as theirs was; but because he could not stay till then, but must needs presumptuously desire to walk upon the Troubled waters to him; he Plung'd himself into greater dangers than ever, Betray'd the weakness of his Faith, and receiv'd a Rebuke for it, and had not Jesus been ready to help him in the very Instant, must have perish'd. And after all, was glad to return again to his Companions in the Vessel, where he could not be easy before, till he had try'd this new Experiment.

And

And still those that quietly remain in the *Ship*, that is, can be content to confine themselves within the compass that Providence allots them; will be in a condition of much greater comfort and safety, than those that will be making unwarrantable Excursions, and walking in untrodden Paths which have no stability, no solid bottom, and in which it is a Mercy if they are not undone.

We shall find Tryals enough of our Courage and Constancy, and Trust in God in our Voyage through this Tempestuous Sea of Humane Life, without courting unnecessary Dangers, such as Providence never design'd for us, and which are often of very fatal consequence; whereas those troubles that we can't avoid, and are of God's disposal, if we do our Part, he will support us under them, and bring them to a happy end at last, as Jesus did this Storm.

For no sooner had he brought his over-daring and yet faint-hearted Disciple safe on board the Ship again, and was himself entred into it, to the great Joy of all; but *the wind ceased*, and on the suddain all things were calm and quiet, as when he once before rebuk'd the Winds and Waters and they presently were still: *and immediately*

ately the Ship was at the Land whither they ^{Luk. 8.24.} went. That is, without any Toil and Labour, and with incredible swiftness, they arriv'd at the Port to which they intended to Sail; and that which so lately they almost despair'd of, or at least thought they could not attain without the greatest difficulty, when Christ was pleas'd to favour them with his Presence, and interest himself in their Safety and Success, unaccountably came to pass, even beyond what they could wish.

The Storm (as that in the other Miracle too) did not cease by degrees, according to the usual course of nature, but vanish'd in a moment, all at once, when the great Lord of nature was pleas'd to have it so; nor did the shatter'd, and it may be, leaky vessel lag slowly forward and with much ado, as one would think it should after such stress of Weather, and in so great a calm, when her Sails, if she had any left, were useless, and her Men faint with the nights fatigue, and not in a condition to ply their oars with any vigour: But quick almost as thought she flew to shoar in an instant.

All this, was justly thought so very strange, that the Seamen and Passengers, *Were sore amaz'd in themselves beyond measure*

sure and wondred, and came and worshipped Jesus, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. And well they might, for who but he that by his Almighty word first
 Gen. 1. 9. *Gather'd the waters of the deep into one Place, and set them their bounds which they should*
 Psa. 104. 9. *not pass, neither turn again to cover the Earth, and said, hitherto shalt thou come but no*
 Job 38. 11. *further, and here shall thy proud waves be-stay'd; who but that all-powerful Being,*
 Psa. 135. 6. *Who can do what he pleaseth in Heaven, and in Earth, in the Sea, and in all deep Places, could make the fiercest Winds and mighty Waters to obey him !*

Let no good Christian therefore, be too much dejected, even in the most discouraging Circumstances whether of his own Affairs or those of the Publick, nor tempt God by presuming upon his assistance in any rash and unwarrantable undertakings; but by adding to his Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Patience, and to Patience a Perfect acquiescence in the Divine disposals, make it his business to secure Christs Favour and Presence with him : and then he need not fear the utmost that wicked Men and Devils can do against him. He that is sure of thy Friendship and Protection, O Almighty Jesus ! What is there in the whole Creation that he need dread?

dread? What publick commotions in the State, what Persecutions in the Church, what private Troubles and Afflictions can injure *him*, whom thou wilt please to shelter under the wings of thy Providence, and watch over him for good?

Why art thou then cast down O my Soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet Praise him who is the health of my countenance and Psa.42.11.
my God.

And how great will be our Tranquility and Joy, when Jesus by his Grace and Mercy shall have quieted all our Storms, if not those of Affliction without, yet those of Passion within, and restor'd to us that Serenity and Peace of Mind which even in the most blustering times is a Heaven upon Earth! With what a swift yet smooth and placid motion shall we then make our way to the Haven of Eternal Rest! And when we have once arriv'd at that long wish'd for Place, how shall we forget our former Sorrows, and the sharp conflicts we have had, the *fightings that were without, and the fears within*, and be dissolv'd in Praise and Gratitude and Love to him who was our merciful deliverer! the Tempests we before were tofs'd in, will make that Eternal calm still

still more welcome and delightful; as
Ease and Safety always relish best, after
great Pain and Danger.

*Whofo is wise and will ponder these things,
even he shall understand the loving Kindness
of the Lord. Psal. 107. 43.*

The

The Tenth Miracle.

*A dumb and deaf Spirit cast out,
from one that had been Possess'd by him from his Childhood.*

MARK IX. 14.

And when he came to his Disciples he saw a great Multitude about them, and the Scribes questioning with them. And he ask'd the Scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the Multitude answer'd and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my Son which hath a Dumb Spirit, &c.

When our Lord went up to Mount Tabor with Peter, James, and John, that they might see his Heavenly Glory in his Transfiguration, and become thereby still more confirm'd in their belief that he was the *Messias*, and more Zealous and Bold after his decease in Asserting that great Truth, and creating a Belief of it in others; the Disciples or

Mat. 10. 1.
S Apostles

Luk. 17. 5. Apostles as the other Evangelists stile them, that were left at the bottom of the Mount, had one brought to them that was grievously Afflicted with the falling Sickness, (as the description of it shews it to be) which the Possession of an evil Spirit had brought upon him, or at least heightened to a very great degree, so as to take away the use of his Hearing and his Speech, and oftentimes to endanger his Life, by *casting him into the Fire and Water*, and the Father of him earnestly desir'd them to cast the evil Spirit out; which not being able to do, they were scoff'd and flouted at by the *Scribes* and the Multitude that was got together about them, and who were well enough pleas'd, no doubt, that they had so fair an opportunity of insulting over them.

But while they were thus employ'd, our Lord descended from the Mount and came to his Disciples; and as soon as the People saw him *they were greatly amaz'd* (at the unusual brightness of his Countenance we may suppose, which the glory of his Transfiguration had still left upon it, as the Face of *Moses*, we read, *shone* when he came down from Mount *Sinai* with the Tables of the Law) and running to him saluted him with great Wonder and Veneration.

Exod. 34.
29.

Veneration. Upon this Jesus took notice of the hot discourse that was amongst them, and ask'd the reason of it; which when he knew, he said to his Disciples, *O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you!*

For having before (as we read *Matt. 10. 1.*) given them Power against *Unclean Spirits* to cast them out, and to *Heal all manner of Sicknes and Disease*, it might well displease him to find, that either their fear of not succeeding made them not attempt to dispossess this evil Spirit, or, (which I rather think was the case here) that though they did attempt it they fail'd of success through the weakness of their faith. He had told them he would endow them with sufficient Ability for Works of this nature when there should be occasion, and very probably 'twas known that he had so, otherwise the Man here would not have brought his Son to them to cure; and therefore, as it must needs be a scurvy reflection upon him in the opinion of the *Jews*, that he had pretended to more than he could make good, so it was very blame-worthy in the Disciples to distrust his Power of inabling them, though in his absence, to do what he had promis'd them Ability of doing, since he

had given them abundant reason to believe that what he had Promis'd he was well able to Perform.

And this diffidence of theirs did the more deserve so sharp a reproof, because if 'twas suffer'd to continue, 'twould make them incapable of that great Work they were to be employed in, of converting the World to Christianity; for unless they could Confirm the Truth of what they Taught, by doing things evidently Miraculous and above all humane Power, 'twould be in vain to expect to bring People off from the Religion of their Fathers, to an upstart *Sect* as 'twas call'd, and which was then *every where spoken against*, and ridicul'd; *to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness.*

Act. 28. 22.

1 Cor. 1.

23.

Now, a Firm Faith being requir'd as a necessary condition on their Part, in order to the exercise of such Miraculous Powers, (and that with the greatest reason, that they might not forget by whose assistance it was that they could do such Wonders, and be tempted to ascribe that to themselves which was the Gift of God) 'twas high time to acquaint them wherein they were deficient, and reprove them for it. And accordingly when they ask'd him Privately, *Why could not we cast the Devil*

Devil out? He told them 'twas because of their *unbelief*; for if ye have *Faith*, says Matt. 17. he, *nothing shall be impossible unto you.* 20.

And *this Faith*, was not only a Belief in *Jesus* as the *Christ*, but an actual firm assurance of his enabling them to execute that extraordinary Commission which he gave them of working Miracles in confirmation of the truth of the Gospel, when ever a fitting occasion was offer'd; and those that had such a Faith, he said should be able to do the greatest Wonders, and those whose hearts fail'd them, and were distrustful of the event, should be able to do nothing; as being unworthy, since they so much doubted his Veracity and Power, to have such assistances from him.

In the first times of our Holy Religion, there were others beside the Apostles and seventy Disciples, that had the gift of doing Miracles, in order to the same great end of confirming the truth of Christianity and winning Men over to the belief of it; but they, not having any express Commission or Authority so to do, I suppose might have some particular secret impulse from the Holy Spirit when they should attempt it; but still, such a *Faith* was necessary that they might

be successful. And were this an age of Miracles the case would be the same; and distrustful doubts, or *unbelief* as our Lord calls it, would hinder the exercise and efficacy of the noblest Gifts.

And this Faith in Christ's Divine Power of doing what ever he pleas'd and enabling whom he pleas'd to do so too, was not only necessary on the part of those who should *work* Miracles, but of those too on whom they should be *wrought*, if capable of so believing, or of others for them if they were not; at least there was to be nothing to the contrary, as is plain from the whole story of the Gospel. Particularly in the case now before us; when the Father of him that was possess'd, at the command of Jesus, brought his Son to him, and gave him the Melancholy account of his Possession, and the sad effects of it, and how long it had been upon him, even from his Infancy, and in this *diffident* way begg'd his assistance, *If thou canst do any thing, have compassion upon us and help us*: our Lord gave him, this quick answer, *If thou canst*; Repeating those words of his which betray'd his want of Faith, and thereby shewing his displeasure at him for it, and then bid him but believe, and he

he should find that *all things are possible to him that believeth.*

As if he had said, Never question my ability, but strengthen thy own Faith, if thou wouldst have thy Son be heal'd. And when the Poor Man was so touched with this Answer, (which he rightly took as a reprimand for the unbelieving *if* which he put in when he ask'd his help) as to *Cry out and say with tears ; Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief!* Jesus then immediately *Rebuked the foul Spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf Spirit, I charge thee come out of the Man, and enter no more into him,* (by which he intimated that he designed not only to put by that fit, but perfectly to cure him) *And the Spirit, as very unwilling to leave his Habitation, Cry'd and rent him sore, and came out of him.* And though his severe handling the Man made him *lie as one Dead, insomuch that many said he was Dead,* yet Jesus took him *by the hand and he arose.*

From all which it appears, how indispensibly requisite *Faith* is, in order to the efficacy of even the most divine Gifts upon our selves or others : and though the Faith here spoken off is of a very particular nature, as was observ'd before, relating to the doing and receiving *Miracles*, which

together with the reason and occasion of them are now ceas'd; yet the same assured trust and affiance in Gods Truth, and Power and Goodness, is equally necessary still, and will always be so, to our receiving the benefit of the wondrous Love of Christ to us, and the influences of his holy Spirit on our Souls, and our paying an acceptable obedience to him. And though 'tis true, that none but a presumptuous Enthusiast will now pretend to work Miracles himself by his Faith, how strong

Eph. 2. 8. soever it may be, or expect to have them wrought upon him; yet we may all hope to save our Souls by it, through the Merits of our Dear Redeemer, nay indeed, can't hope to save them without it, since

Mark 16. 16. he hath plainly told us, *He that Believes and is Baptiz'd shall be sav'd, and he that believes not shall be Damn'd.*

And if we may attain Salvation by our Faith, we need not be concern'd that 'tis not attended with those *Miraculous Powers* with which some Believers in the Beginning of Christianity were endow'd; for they were ultimately design'd for no other End but to advance Gods Glory in the Salvation of Mankind: and therefore, if we can reach that Blessed end without them we have no reason to complain of the want of 'em. If

If Faith will still enable us to *Overcome the World, and work Righteousness*, if 'twill Ruin the Dominion of sin within us, and *Purify our Hearts*, and make us *run with patience* and perseverance, *the Race that is set before us*; we need not Trouble our selves any further; for this is enough for us.

And since for these great purposes Faith is now as Indispensibly necessary as ever, only taken in a greater Latitude, 'twill become us to *Examine our selves whether we be in the Faith, and to* ^{2 Cor. 13. 5.} *perfect what is lacking in it*; adding to ^{1 Thess. 3. 10.} our own sincere endeavours most earnest

Prayer to him who is the *giver of every good* ^{Jam. 1. 17.} *and Perfect Gift*: Saying with the Apostles, *Lord Increase our Faith!* and Crying out with Tears as the Father of the possess'd Person did here in this Miracle, *Lord, I Believe, help thou my unbelief!* ^{Lu. 17. 5.}

Now from our Lord's reprov'g the *Apostles* for the great weakness of their Faith upon this occasion, we may first observe, for the Comfort of the too Timorous, Melancholy Sort of Christians, who are apt to be extreamly Dejected upon every Trip in their Conversations, and cool performance of their Religious Duties, every little doubt and diffidence in

in matters of Belief, as if they were without Faith, of a Reprobate sense, and in a lost undone Condition; we may from hence observe for their Comfort, that a true Faith even in the most excellent Persons, may sometimes be very weak and Trembling and mix'd with great distrusts and Spiritual deadness and Aridity, and yet afterwards Revive, and recover such degrees of Strength and Vigour, as will make them great Examples of every thing that is good.

Let such People be Intreated so far to Rouse themselves, and shake off that Dead weight which lies upon their Spirits, as to call to mind this Passage which we are now considering, and see at how Low an Ebb the Faith even of some of the Apostles was, tho' they were constantly with our Saviour, under his Immediate instructions, and always in view of his most engaging example. Nor was this the only time that they shew'd how weak their Faith was; many other Instances of like nature might be mention'd, and their all forsaking their Blessed Master in his greatest necessity, and leaving him alone in the hands of his Implacable and cruel Enemies can never be forgotten. *St. Peter* indeed follow'd him at a distance,

distance, and secretly crept into the high Priests Hall, that he might see what would become of Jesus; but when he was suspected to belong to him, and question'd about it by some of the Servants, tho' He before with great confidence and seeming Resolution had said to our Lord that he would *Lay down his Life for his sake, and tho' he should Die with him* ^{John 13. 37.} yet would not deny him in any wise; yet notwithstanding all this, and tho' Christ gave ^{Mar. 14. 31.} him warning of it before hand, he thrice deny'd and that with Oaths and Imprecations, that he so much as *knew* him. — 66, &c.

This to be sure is bad enough, and looks more like the behaviour of an Infidel ^{Lu. 22. 31.} than the chief of the Apostles; and yet his Faith, thro' the Prayer of Jesus for him, was so far from failing utterly, that with invincible Courage he afterwards made good his Promise of going tho' not *with his Master, yet for him to Prison and to Death*: As did also the rest, who suffer'd Martyrdom for his sake, and after they had been glorious Instruments in the great work of Planting the Gospel, attested the Truth of it in the midst of Torments, and seal'd it with their Blood.

In all our Failures therefore and Imperfections, our doubts and fears and scruples,

scruples, instead of giving way to Melancholy and desponding thoughts, let us bear up our Spirits with such considerations as these; (*viz.*) that the best of Men have been in as bad a condition or worse, that no Man can be always alike, that the cloud will blow over in time, and that God does not require perfection at our hands, but only sincerity, or an honest hearty *Endeavour* of believing and living according to the directions of the Gospel: which is the most gracious Institution that ever was, and makes all the allowances for humane Frailty and Infirmary, that can be made with safety.

And since the complexion of the body does doubtless very much Influence the Mind, and 'tis the Devils usual artifice to take Advantage of Mens Tempers to their Ruine; and is always ready to instil thoughts of despair into those whose Gloomy disposition is most apt to entertain them, that he may amuse them into a careless neglect of holy Duties, thro' a belief that they are to no purpose and will not be accepted: It concerns us to do our utmost to defeat and disappoint this great Deceiver and correct our Melancholy by a confirm'd hope and trust in the Infinite Mercies of God, verily
persua-

persuading our selves that he permits us to be under these uncomfortable circumstances for the present in order to our Future good; that time will disperse these Vapours, and that God will at length restore us as he has done many others to greater degrees than ever of Spiritual Life and strength, and the Inseparable Attendants of them, Cheerfulness and Joy.

But, lest any ill use should be made of what has been now said to the Encouragement of a thoughtless indifference to Religion, 'twill not be amiss to make all sure, by giving one Direction whereby we may know whether our Faith be right and sound at bottom or not, when under the greatest disadvantages; and it is this. If it be true and real, 'twill put us upon all due methods of strengthening it, and recovering its lost Vigour, and will not suffer us to slacken our Pious endeavours upon any pretence what-ever; and notwithstanding all the disheartnings we may meet with, will urge us on to greater degrees of Diligence, and fill our Breasts with a Pungent grief and sorrow for what we find amiss, and make us Pray and strive against it with all our might, and wish from the bottom of our Souls

Souls that we could Conquer it. But if on the contrary, when we find Infidelity grows upon us, and we begin to be cool to Religion, we take little or no Notice of it, are in no concern at all, and use no endeavours to recover a Pious sense of things, and confirm our belief of the great truths of the Gospel, pretending that 'tis nothing but some bodily Indisposition which will soon wear off again of it self; our easiness under this truly deplorable condition is but too plain a sign that we are more pleas'd with it than we should be, and that our Faith is too too near expiring. And thus much for the First observation from the great weakness of the Apostles Faith.

We may further observe from it, what little Reason People of the highest attainments have, to presume too much upon their own strength, and be too confident and secure of their condition, since the First and greatest Saints of the Christian Church, were sharply charg'd by our Mild Saviour himself with almost unsufferable unbelief, *O Faithless and perverse generation*, says he to them, *How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you!*

And

And this observation may be of great use, if duly consider'd, to those Professors, who because they have not been guilty of scandalous and notorious offences, and give due attendance it may be to the Publick offices of Religion, and have the repute of good and sober Men; are apt to think their Faith Impregnable, and are perswaded *they shall never be remov'd* Pl. 30. 6. 7. God of his goodness having made their Hill so strong.

But let him that thinketh he standeth take I Cor. 10. heed lest he fall, Remembring the great 12. defects even of the Apostles Faith, and not think of himself more highly than he ought Rom. 12. 3. to think, but think soberly, and with the greatest seriousness and Humility endeavour to work out his Salvation with Fear Phil. 2. 12. and Trembling, lest at last he should come short of the Promises thro' unbelief.

Let us remember in particular, how shamefully St. Peter fell, and how careful the great St. Paul was lest he should do so too, and with what watchful Discipline He kept under his Body and brought it into subjection, and that for this very reason, lest that by any means when he had I Cor. 9. preach'd to others he himself should become a 27. cast away.

Let

Let us consider that all those exhortations to stedfastness, and diligence, and circumspection even to the end, which we meet with so often in Scripture, and are directed to all in general, even the best Men that live, as well as the loose and careless; do plainly imply that the most pious Christian is not secure of his Perseverance, but rather in so weak and tottering a condition, whilst in this World of Temptation and Sin, that the greatest caution and circumspection is but needful to keep him upright, that his Faith may hold out to the end, *and receive a full reward.*

2 Joh. 8.

Rom. 11.
20.Heb. 10.
39.

Let no Man therefore, of what attainments soever, be *High-minded, but fear*, and walk before God with great modesty and a heedful eye; that he may never be of *those who draw back unto perdition, but of those who truly and stedfastly believe, to the saving of the Soul*: Reflecting sometimes upon that awakening passage in *Heb. 6. 4, &c.* where the Apostle supposeth it possible for even the greatest Proficients in Religion to fall away; and with all says that *'tis impossible*, (which must at least signifie the utmost difficulty) to *renew them again to Repentance.*

But

But 'twas not only want of *Faith* that disabled the Apostles from casting out the Evil Spirit, but their neglect of *Prayer* and *Fasting* too; *this kind*, says Jesus, *cometh not forth but by Prayer and Fasting*, both which were requisite as well as *Faith*, to the obtaining the Divine assistance in so great a degree, as to be able to eject such a powerful and malignant Dæmon as it seems that was, especially after so long a Possession which he had of the Poor Man, even from his very infancy.

Now the Apostles had been too negligent of both those Duties, (which might be the reason of the weakness of their *Faith* too, which is strengthened by nothing so much as frequent fervent Prayer, as that is wing'd by fasting) and therefore were but ill prepar'd for so great a Work; and very likely too, might in their surprize forget at the very time they needed it to lift up their hearts to Heaven for God's aid and so were foil'd in the unblest'd attempt. Which made them so sensible through whose Power alone it was that they could be sufficient for such Wondrous things, and what methods they must use to be made Partakers of it; that they soon after desir'd their great Master to *teach them to Pray as John had taught his*

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Disci-

ples; and we read in their Acts that they were frequent in this Holy Duty and in Fasting, and wrought their Miracles (in which they were never baffled afterwards) in the Name and Power of Jesus, having first implored his help.

Now from this passage we may learn what course we are to take in casting out the Spirit of Uncleanness that is in us, and dispossessing our obstinate and habitual Vices; and this we may depend upon, that the united force of earnest Prayer, and prudent Fasting, and a lively Faith mutually aiding and supporting each other can never fail of Success. For these are the conditions upon performance of which God has promis'd such Grace and Assistance as shall be effectual; but 'tis presumption to expect it without them.

Nor will either of them *singly* be sufficient, as wanting the other two, to keep it up in due Strength and Vigour. *Faith* without *Prayer*, must needs be weak and languishing, as being depriv'd of its proper food and nourishment; and *Prayer* without *Fasting*, or *Abstinence* at least, will be heavy and dispirited, like an oppress'd and smother'd flame, unable to mount aloft, and reach the Throne of God: and both, where there is no true
Faith;

Faith, will be but as strange Fire, unhal-
low'd and unacceptable.

Ask and it shall be given you, says our Matt. 7:7
Lord, seek and ye shall find, knock and it
shall be open'd to you; even the Treasury
of the divine Grace, and Favour, and As-
sistance, whereby we shall be enabled to
Will and to do according to his good Pleasure: Phil. 2:13.
But then we must *ask in Faith, and in Purity* Jam. 1. 6:
with holy hands, and a clean heart, with Pi- 1 Tim. 2:
ous affections, and sincere desires of being
Cleans'd from all our filthiness both of Flesh 2 Cor. 7:1:
and Spirit, and of perfecting holiness in the
fear of God. And such Prayer as this, is
an employment so truly Heavenly, as
must needs be of wondrous efficacy to
drive out every vile Affection, and en-
gage Men in a Conversation becoming the Phil. 1:27
Gospel of Christ.

And that our Prayers may be offered up
with a prevailing fervour, such abstinence
is highly needful as will render the *Head*
clear and bright, and make our Thoughts
our own. For nothing more indisposes a
Man for Spiritual exercises, and hinders the
Operations of the Mind, than the fumes
that arise from a loaded stomach; which
make him fitter for sleep than Contem-
plation and Prayer, and bring a lifeless
heaviness upon the Soul, as if 'twere all
over Earth.

And therefore our Blessed Lord, and his Apostles, and all holy men ever since, as they often retir'd into Places of Privacy, where without Interruption they might converse with God, and with greater freedom pourout their Souls before him ; so at those more solemn times they either totally abstained from food, if their Constitution would bear it, or else eat very sparingly of such course fare as should but Just suffice to support Nature, till their intended devotions were finish'd. For as *Prayer* is called by the antients the *Wing of the Soul*, so they said *fasting* was *that which gave wings to Prayer* ; made it spritely and vigorous, and as near of kin to the Devotion of Pure Spirits, as the Souls union with the Body would permit.

But all things of this nature must be guided by an honest Prudence, which will proportion both the length and frequency and degrees of abstinence and Fasting, according to the strength of Mens several constitutions and other accidental circumstances that may occur ; otherwise they will prove injurious to Devotion as well as health, and by despiriting the body too much, either destroy that religious fervour which they were design'd to promote, or else heat the brain

brain into the ungovernable and indecent raptures of Enthusiasm.

Nor is fasting only of use as 'tis a help to Devotion, but 'tis very necessary too by way of Discipline; there being some vices, which Proceeding from too great Indulgence to the Body, and being grown habitual and become a second nature by long Custom and Practice, can never be Conquer'd but by the severities of Mortification: Whereby the corrupt desire being by degrees abated, the Flesh is at length Humbled, and subdued to the Spirit. And therefore it is, that we are exhorted to *Mortify the Deeds of the Body*, Rom. 8. 13. *Fornication, Uncleanness, and all Inordinate Affection, and evil Concupiscence; to be as* Colos. 3. 3. *'twere dead to the World, and to Crucify* Gal. 5. 24. *the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts, that the Body may be kept under and brought* 1 Cor. 9. *into subjection.* All which expressions denote the Exercise of some Rigour and Severity upon vicious Flesh and Blood, in order to its submission to the Government of Religion; the subtracting so much from its usual Nourishment, as may in due degree Impoverish the overheated Spirits, and allay the boilings of the Blood, and clear the Mind from the fumes of Luxury and Excess, that the Man
T 3 may

may be able coolly and calmly to reflect upon the Iniquity of his past Sins, attend to the checks of his Conscience, and the advice of his Reason, and comply with the Motions of the good Spirit of God to a sincere Repentance and Amendment.

Nothing of this Nature can be done in the heat and hurry of a full carter of Lewdness; when the pamper'd Body is impatient of restraint, and rushes into all excess of Riot with as much Fury and as little thought, *as the Horse does into the Battle.* And therefore, the only way in such a case is to tame the unruly Beast, by withdrawing the fuel of his Impure flames, or as St. Paul expresses it, *by not making Provision for the flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof.*

Rom. 13.
ult.

This kind of unclean Spirit, goeth not out but by such Discipline as this; and till the head-strong Sinner is by such methods become quiet and sedate and capable of cool thinking, 'twill be to almost as little purpose to talk to him of Faith, and Repentance, and Prayer, &c; As to Preach to a Swine against nastyness and Intemperance, when 'swilling at a full Trough, or taking his Repose on a Dunghill. Which shews of what great use

use the Enjoyning severe Penance upon notorious Sinners is, and what reason all good People have to wish that that excellent Discipline of the Primitive Church were again Restor'd; and what little hopes we can have of a thorough Reformation till it is. Those that need it most, are the furthest from Exercising it upon themselves, and would but Laugh at those that should advise them to it: And therefore till God or the Church does it for them; God by sickness and Affliction, or the Church by her censures and the Rod of Discipline, things will be at the lewd Pass they are; or rather, as we find by a Melancholy Experience, will dayly grow worse and worse, till the measure of Mens Iniquity is full, and the time is come for Judgment.

Thus we see how necessary Prayer and Fasting are to enliven and support our Faith, in order to the ejecting those foul and destructive vices which have taken Possession of our Souls; how mutually all Three assist each other, and how Irresistibly powerful their Joint Forces will be to vanquish and drive out the most obstinate and stubborn sin.

But then, we must not think it strange or be discourag'd if we meet with great

opposition, and endure many a painful Throe, like the *Pangs of a Woman in Travail*, before the great work be completed. As the evil Spirit here, when our Lord *charg'd him to come out of the Possess'd Man*, and enter no more into him, *cry'd and threw him down and Rent him sore with Racking inward Pains, and left him as one dead.*

Suppose the Spirit of Intemperance and Uncleanness has had long Possession of the Soul of any one, and often thrown him into a Lustful Fever, and made him wallow in filthyness not to be mention'd; or suppose the Man swells with Pride, or Pines away with Envy, or Foams and Gnasheth his Teeth with the fury of Revenge, or lies Groveling upon the Earth with Covetousness; suppose a Man has been long under the Power of any of these Wickednesses, let him resolve never so sincerely to Conquer and Root it out, and set about it never so Vigorously, and Pray never so Heartily, and add Fasting to his Prayers too, and all this in Humble Affiance in the Divine Assistance, to make his endeavours successful: He must after all, expect to find it a work of Difficulty and Time, and to meet with great Reluctancy from deprav'd, corrupted nature, and

and many strong Temptations both from within and without, which 'twill be no easy matter to resist and deny effectually. And if sometimes he should happen to be worsted, and born down again into a commission in some degree of the Vice he is contending with, 'twill be no strange thing. But then, instead of being discourag'd by this Ill success so as to give over the Conflict, it should engage him to contend with still greater Resolution; to be more and more watchful and circumspect, more constant and fervent in Prayer for the Divine assistance, trusting less in his own strength, and more in God's, and keeping his Body still more under by Prudent severities if there be occasion; Remembring that these difficulties will not last always, but the happy time will come, when virtue will be grown as habitual to him as vice was, and then all these uneasinesses and strugglings will be at an end, provided he perseveres in the Holy warfare, and pushes it on with that Courage and bravery which becomes a Christian.

Till an old habitual Vice is thoroughly Mortify'd, we must expect that 'twill revive upon every new Temptation, and put us upon fresh Action; which should indeed

indeed make us have a care of too much security, and keep us upon a constant guard, knowing that we fight not only against *Flesh and Blood*, but against *Principalities and Powers, and the Rulers of the darkness of this World*; which, tho to us Invisible, and Blessed be God that they are so, do constantly Besiege us, watching for all favourable opportunities to Attack us, and which they will not fail to improve to the utmost. But let not this dismay us, knowing under whose Banner 'tis we fight, even that of the victorious Jesus; and whom we have to support us when Press'd too hard by the Enemy, even the Spirit of God, and his Powerful Grace; which is able to defend us against their most furious Assaults, "To strengthen
"those that stand, to comfort the weak
"hearted, to raise up them that fall, and
"finally to beat down Satan under our
"Feet: So that assuredly trusting in his
"Defence, we need not Fear the Power
"of any Adversaries, thro the might of
"Jesus our Redeemer.

But to think of Victory without Fighting, or of Fighting without Danger and difficulty, and the various turns of successes and Repulses; is to think against the nature of things, the Account the Scriptures give

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us of the Christian warfare, and the Experience of all the World.

Wherefore, to conclude our Observations upon this *Miracle*: As'tis *Faith* Principally, that must enable us to overcome our three great Enemies, *the World, the Flesh, and the Devil*, and vanquish any Inveterate stubborn vice that hath domineer'd it in our Souls for any time; so this *Faith* must be Invigorated, and the Divine Assistance Implor'd, by fervent Prayer, and prudent Abstinence and Fasting; and if we go on in this good and safe course with Patience and Resolution, and due Caution and Circumspection; tho we are fain to strive and struggle hard, and sometimes are surpriz'd and Foil'd, yet our great Champion will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but will seasonably come in to our Rescue, and take us by the hand and raise us up, and in his own good time give us such a Measure of Spiritual strength, as will make us more than Conquerors.

1 Cor. 10.

13.

Rom. 8.

37.

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The Eleventh Miracle.

Ten Lepers cleans'd.

LUKE XVII. 12, &c.

And it came to pass as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain Village, there met him ten Men that were Lepers, &c.

IN the Ninth Chapter of this Gospel, v. 51. we find Jesus resolving upon his last visit to Jerusalem, that he might finish the glorious work which he came into the World to do; For the time was come that he should be received up into Heaven, from whence he came down to be a Sacrifice for sinners. And some of the Samaritans thro whose Country he went in his Passage from Galilee to the Holy City, very Inhospitably refus'd him Entertainment because he was going to Worship at Jerusalem, looking upon it as a great Affront to their Temple at Mount Gerizim;

Gerizim; which, after the return of the Tribe of *Judah* from the Captivity of *Babylon*, was built in opposition to that of the *Jews*, and was the occasion of such heats between them, that they deny'd the Common offices of Humanity to each other, as we find they did here in this Instance.

Upon this great rudeness shewn to their Master, the Warm Disciples, *James* and *John*, those *Sons of Thunder*, as our Lord surnam'd them, and perhaps upon this occasion, were for making Examples of those surly Schismatics, by Commanding Fire from heaven to consume them as *Elias* ^{2 King. 1.} did. But the meek *Jesus* turn'd and Re- ^{10.} buk'd them, and said, ye know not what ^{Luk. 9.55,} manner of Spirit ye are of, for the Son of ^{36.} Man is not come to destroy Mens Lives but to save them.

Now as they were going on to another Village, there met him ten Men that were Lepers, which stood afar off, and they lifted up their Voices and said, *Jesus* Master, have Mercy on us! And had *Jesus* been so tender of his Honour, as some are now adays, and had the same Resentments, as the *World* both has and justifies; Anger would have stifled all Compassion, and the Lepers have gone without a Cure.

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For, to hold his hand from bestowing extraordinary Blessings whilst in a place so very unworthy of them, was as the World would think the least that he could do in such a Case; and to work Miraculous Cures among People that bore such an Inveterate hatred to the Jews, and had but just before put so great an Affront upon him, purely because he was going to Worship God at Jerusalem, would have been to shew them too much Favour and a kind of Encouragement of their Schism.

But he who hath Commanded us to
 Matth. 5. *Love our Enemies, to Bless them that Curse*
 44. *us, to do good to them that hate us, and*
 22. 2. *Pray for them that Despightfully use us and*
Persecute us, was so far from stopping his Ears to the cries of these Wretched Creatures, upon Account of the Ill usage he met with from the Country; that immediately he took Pity on them, and when he saw them he said, go shew your selves to the Priests, and it came to pass that as they went they were cleansed.

Whoever is a real object of Charity and Pity, and wheresoever we may meet him, or whencesoever he may come; as Christians we are bound to relieve him to the best of our Ability. Even he that
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is actually our Enemy, and it may be hath dealt very basely and Inhumanely by us, is yet so much our Brother in the fence of our Holy Religion, that we must not shut up our Bowels of Compassion from him when in his necessity he cries to us for help.

Much less should any Man's being of a Family, a Party, or a Nation, that have and do oppose the Interests we are in, be a Barr to our Charity to him; and least of all should Difference in Religion harden our Hearts to one another, and make us forget that we are Men.

A false Religion, or wrong Notions and Opinions in some particulars among such as Profess the true, tho when obstinately persisted in, after all due Methods have been taken to Inform them better, it may take off from that *Intimacy* and *Endearment* which is amongst those that are of one Heart and one Mind, and is apt to cause a mutual strangeness between People of contrary Sentiments in a matter of such Moment and Consequence; yet it must by no means Abate, much less Destroy, our Charity and Compassion, but rather heighten it towards them, as a means of all other the most effectual to soften and melt down a stubborn Disposi-

Disposition, and overcome Evil with Good.

This is the Perfection of our most Merciful Religion, and is like Gods leading us by *his goodness to Repentance*; and 'tis the best Assurance we can have that we are Christians Indeed, when we are Act-ed by the same Spirit which was in *Jesus* our Redeemer.

And if this be the Temper of our Saviour, as we are sure it is, (and Blessed be his goodness for ever!) How should it Encourage us notwithstanding our Innumerable Provocations, to cry to him for Mercy who is our *Jesus*, and our Master; who came to seek and to save that which was lost, and to heal the foul and deadly Diseases of our Souls! And be they never so Polluted, if we bewail and lament the sad Condition we are in, and sincerely desire to be cleans'd, his Bowels will never leave yerning over us, till he has made us whole.

Our Wickednesses indeed as such, must needs keep us at distance from the Holy *Jesus*, and would for ever do so were not
 Lam. 3. 23. his Compassions *New every Morning*; But the Prayers and Tears and Importunate Addresses of such as are truly Penitent, will not fail of obtaining Pardon and a
 Cure,

Cure, from him who came on Purpose to wash away the sins of the World with his Blood. He that in an Intimate sense of the great need he has of Mercy, with a thorough Abhorrence of his vileness, and a lively Faith in his Redeemers Power and Goodness, throws himself at his Feet, as the Leper did, *Mar. 1. 40.* and lays open *his Wounds and bruises and Putrefying Sores*, concealing nothing from him, but lifting up his Voice with the Ten Lepers Here, crys out aloud, *Jesus, Master, have Mercy on me*; need never fear that the Sight of his Pollutions will cause in Jesus a Loathing and Aversion to him, but rather that they will effectually move him to commiserate his sad State, and heal those worst of Plagues, which are Incurable by any but himself.

But Jesus did not immediately cleanse these Lepers, nor expressly say that he would, only bids them *go shew themselves to the Priests*. Now one would think it must needs seem very odd and strange to them, that Jesus should suppose them clean before they were so, and as such send them to *Jerusalem*, when as yet their Leprosy was full upon them; and 'tis much that they did not beg to be heal'd first, (as the other Leper was

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whom he Cur'd and then sent to the Priests, and of whom 'tis very likely they had heard) But had they done thus they might have been Lepers for ever. For this would have betray'd so great a Mixture of *distrust* with their Faith, as would have depriv'd them of the Blessing which our Lord design'd them.

But this Command of his they took to be a grant of their Request, and Immediately went without asking any further Questions; not doubting but they should be heal'd before they came to the Priests, near whom they knew they must not dare to come if they were not.

And here, the Faith of these Poor Creatures is very remarkable in the *Goodness* as well as Power of our Saviour. For he had given them no *Promise* that he would Heal them, 'twas at most an Intimation only that he did *intend* it, since otherwise he would have pass'd them by without any Regard, or to be sure not have rais'd their expectation of a Cure by ordering them to go and shew themselves to the Priests; for this, had he design'd nothing more, would have been to sport himself with their Calamity.

As his Proceeding so far therefore, might well give them hopes that he design'd

sign'd to Heal them, so his going no farther might Justly make them at a stand too, and Prove no Inconsiderable Tryal of their Faith. But they depended so much upon his known Compassion, and generous sweetness of Temper, that they could not think he would send them to the Priests only to expose them; and were so thoroughly Perswaded that his Power was able to overtake them with a Cure as they went, or to reach them as soon as they came there, that they Immediately, full of Joyful Expectations, betook themselves to their Journey to Jerusalem.

Now from hence we may Learn what kind of Faith it is that will be Effectual to our Salvation; not such a Faith as is made up only of confident hopes and Expectations, but such as is Obediential, and makes us chearfully set about what Jesus hath Commanded. We must not only *Lift up our voices, and cry Jesus Master, have Mercy on us!* And then presently assure our selves we shall be sav'd, For *why call ye me Lord, Lord, says the same Jesus, and do not the things that I say?* But we must so Confide in the Merits of his All-healing, Purifying Blood, as to go on in the ways of Christian Duty, and by Patient continuance in well doing, seek Rom. 2. 7.
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for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, and Eternal Life.

And let us be Assur'd of this, that whatever Commands he thinks fit to lay upon us, and whatever delays and disappointments he may give us in the matter of our most earnest Prayers and Wishes; All his dispensations how dark and Intricate, and unaccountable soever they may appear to us, will end at last in a full enjoyment of the desires of our hearts, if with Hope and Patience and Resignation, we persevere in an unfeigned Faith and sincere obedience. As those Lepers readily obeying so seemingly Mistim'd a Command of our Saviour, and firmly Believing in his Power and Goodness; *as they went*, they had their Reward and found that *they were cleansed*.

But why did our Lord order these ten Lepers, and the other he had healed before, Matt. 8. 2. *To go and shew themselves to the Priests?* The fourth verse of that chapter, and Mark 1. 44. tell us it was *that they might offer for their cleansing the gift which Moses commanded*, Levit. 14. 10. and be legally pronounced clean by those that were the proper Judges in that case; without which they could not have been admitted into Society, and so not have enjoyed

Levit. 13.

enjoyed the full benefit of their Cure. So careful was our Lord to be thoroughly beneficial to those whom he was pleas'd to make the Subjects of his mercy, and likewise not to disobey the Law that was then in force, which he *came not to destroy but to fulfill*. And 'tis further said this was done *for a testimony unto them*; that is, to assure them, the Priests and People as well as the cured Lepers, that he was no Impostor but the true *Messias*, since he could heal that foul Disease with his *touch* only, as *Matt. 8. 3.* Nay at a *distance*, as in this Miracle, by a meer act of his will, which the *Jews* confess'd to be *the finger of God*, peculiarly of his sending and removing, and look'd upon it as unlawful for any but a Priest, who acted by God's authority, so much as to attempt to cure: And did it in such a regular way too, as shew'd he had no ill designs upon the present establishment.

^{2 Kin. 5. 7.}
^{Matt. 11. 5.}

Which way of procedure was agreeable to the advice he gave to the twelve Apostles, when he sent them forth to Preach the Gospel, and gave them Power to work Miracles to confirm their Doctrine; *Be ye wise as Serpents and innocent* ^{Matt. 10.} *as Doves.* And it will teach us, that ^{16.}

Prudence is necessary in the management of our best actions, lest they give occasion of offence, and raise a suspicion of *Ill-intrigues*, under the shew of Piety and doing good.

The more excellent any thing is, the more busie and curious will envy be to spy faults and blemishes in it, and make a mighty noise about a very small matter, to hinder its taking due effect and turn good into evil. Great caution therefore should be us'd, not to lie open to any thing of this nature, and to do nothing in the service of Religion but what may be thoroughly justified. More especially to take care that no just cause of Prejudice or Jealousie be given to our Governors; who may very much hinder the Progress of Truth and Vertue, when they look upon the methods of advancing it with an evil eye. For let the pretence be what it will and the appearance never so fair, when things are carry'd on in a disorderly way, and gifts are set up against Government, and no notice taken of what ought to have the prime regard; it may justly be suspected that all is not right at the bottom.

Our Saviours constant Course, in this and every other passage of his Life, was
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by an exact conformity to the Law that was then in force both in Church and State, to stop the mouth of Calumny when it should object to him Ambitious and Popular designs; and which he effectually did, when ever such objections were made. And could they have fastened any of those ill things upon him which their malice frequently prompted them to offer at; what he afterwards suffered with the Innocence and Merit of the Worlds Redeemer, would have been no more than his due as a detestable Impostor.

He often indeed, and very sharply, rebuked the Priests, and Scribes, and Pharisees, for their manifold Corruptions and vile Hypocrisie, and calls them *Blind guides, Serpents, generation of Vipers, painted Sepulchres, beautiful in shew but full of rottenness within, that neither go into the Kingdom of God themselves, nor suffer those that are entering to go in;* which shews what a very ill opinion he had of them and which he often openly declared: But because they sat in Moses's seat, he charges the People, *whatever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not.*

Matt. 23.

Mar. 7. 9.
12, 13.

Matt. 23.
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So that we see, he was far from countenancing a Schism in the Church, or separation from it, because the Government and Ministrations of it were in ill hands; notwithstanding which, he constantly communicated with it himself, and duly observed its rites, even those that were of meer Humane institution, such as the Feasts of *Purim*, and the Dedication of the Temple, and wrought a Miracle to enable himself to pay the accustomed Tribute to the repairs and other uses of it, *lest he should offend*: Only he warned his Hearers not to be corrupted by the vile example of their Priests and Rulers, and to distinguish between the Person and the Function.

Matt. 17.
27.

A distinction highly needful to be made, and yet too much overlooked; for what is the function the worse because some ill Men are of it? The Authority is the same by which a wicked and a good Priest acts, and a Leper may receive the benefit of being pronounc'd clean when Christ hath made him so, by the one as well as the other; or else our Lord would never have sent those whom he cured to the Priests of his time, who he knew were bad enough.

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The Truth is, God expects Obedience to his ordinances, whoever 'tis that officiates; and his Blessing will attend the Peoples sincere performance of their Duty, tho he that Ministers should bring a Curse upon himself. And I'm sure 'twill be no excuse for Schism and Separation before God or to any sober unprejudic'd Man, that the Ministry of any Church is not so holy as it should be; since true Piety will be never the *less*, but rather the *more* acceptable to God, for Mens being under a degenerate and unworthy Clergy.

But thanks be to God, the case is not so with us; however, if it were, the Function being so truly Venerable and Holy, ought to confer a Proportionable degree of respect upon the Person, and cause a due Regard to the Offices he performs by virtue of it, tho in himself the Man be undeserving: But the unworthyness of the Person, can never in any reason, reflect dishonour upon the function, much less should any Man be undervalu'd purely for his being of that sacred Order, which yet is too much the Practice of the World, and an Evident sign that Religion is now in the *Wane*.

But, our Lord, we see, had other Notions, and took other Measures. Nor was

Matt. 22.
17. &c.

was he less careful not to make disturbance in the State: For tho' he knew the Romans had usurp'd the Jewish Government, to which they had no Title but the Sword; yet when an ensnaring Question was ask'd him, *Master, is it lawful to give Tribute to Caesar or not?* He bids them *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesars and to God the things that are Gods.* And when one apply'd himself to him to put an end to a difference between him and his Brother about Dividing their Inheritance; he warily declines it with this Answer, *Man who made me a Judge or a divider over you?* Lest it should be Interpreted as an Assuming of more Authority than belong'd to him, and give offence to those whose business it was to decide such Controversies.

Luk. 12.
14.

Rom. 14.

'Tis excellent advice therefore which St. Paul gives, and very needful to be observ'd, that even the best Actions and Designs may be thoroughly successful; *Let not your good be Evil spoken of*, that is, thro your Imprudent Management: For tho it is good, as the same Apostle says, *to be Zealously Affected in a good thing*, (Reformation of Manners suppose, and curing the Leprosy of Sin) yet our Zeal

Gal. 4.18.

Zeal must be *According to knowledge*; not Blind and head-strong, but directed by wise Counsels, and the heat of it temper'd into a moderate warmth by Goodness, and Meekness, and Humility, and an inoffensive Carriage towards all Men: Otherwise 'twill soon grow into Religious madness, and do more mischief than good. Rom. 10. 2.

But enough upon this particular. It follows in the relation of this Miracle, that one of the ten Lepers, *When he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at Jesus's feet, giving him thanks, and he was a Samaritan.* He was so sensible of the great benefit that Jesus had conferred upon him, and of the extraordinary manner of his Cure; that he concluded himself bound, as to give glory to God in the first Place, who is the Eternal Fountain of Mercy, so likewise humbly to return his heartiest Thanks to that most excellent Person who had such Power communicated to him, as he found to be truly Divine.

Nothing but the great Power of God, he knew, could cleanse an inveterate Leprosie: and for Jesus to make that foul Disease vanish in an instant, and perfectly leave

leave ten infected Persons as they were walking on together at a great distance from him, without any applications first used or so much as a touch, or a Commanding word; could not but demonstrate that 'twas God enabled him to work so great a Miracle. Good reason therefore was there that all of them as well as this *Samaritan*, when they saw in how amazing a manner they were healed should Return back, &c.

Now this shews us the true order and method of Thanksgiving. First, as is most due, our Devoutest Praises must be given to God from whom Originally comes every good and perfect gift; and then should grateful acknowledgements be made to the Blessed instrument that conveys the Benefaction to us. And the greater and more Spiritual the Benefaction is, and the more evident signs of an Extraordinary, and it may be Miraculous Power and Mercy we discover in the manner of bestowing it; the greater reason have we, not only to look up to God with suitable Affections as the Adoreable Benefactor, but also in due measure to Esteem, and Thank, and Love, those whom he thinks fit to Honour with the lovely Character of his *Almoners*, and in-
trusts

trusts with the disposal of the Riches of his Goodness.

Though God is indeed the Donor, yet the hand by which he gives must not be disregarded; and he is very unworthy and ungrateful to his Brother who takes no notice of his Kindness and Charity, under pretence of being all-over Praise and Thanks to God.

But then 'tis infinitely worse to be so intirely taken up in Extolling the Beneficence of our Brother, as to forget to give the Glory to that Divine being, who enabled, and inclined him thus to do us good.

So in the case of Spiritual Leprosie, or the Pollution of the Soul by Sin, *How Beautifull upon the Mountains are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of Peace and Salvation! To whom is committed the word of Reconciliation, and the administration of the Pledges of the wondrous Love of God! Who are to wash us in the Laver of regeneration, that we may be clean, and communicate to us of that most Precious Blood, which was shed to take away the Sins of the World! And though 'tis the goodness of God that Pardons, and the Blood of Jesus that Purifies, yet those that convey both to us, and direct us how* to

Isai. 52. 7.
Rom. 10.
15.

2. Cor. 10. 1

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to be duely qualified to receive them in their full Power and Virtue, no doubt should be looked upon with Veneration, and Love, and Gratitude, as the Ministers of God, and dispensers of his Bounty.

Jud. 16. But then, *No Man's Person must be had in such Admiration as in the least to derogate from the Divine Honour, and Sacrilegiously to rob him of his Glory, who is All in all.*

Too much of this nature is in the Romish Church, which joins the Merits of her Saints with those of our Redeemer, and makes them sharers in that Praise which should be wholly his. But as the great Apostle says, *was Paul crucified for you? Did any of your numerous Calendar Die for your Sins and Rise again for your justification?* The most excellent Persons were but Servants under Christ, in the great Work of bringing Souls to Heaven, and 'twas the Blessing of God that
 1 Cor. 1. 13. gave success to their Labours; and therefore, though they are to be esteemed very highly in Love for their Works sake, yet that esteem must be kept within due Bounds, and not suffered to grow to those Excesses, which to the great scandal of Christianity, are too notorious in the Church of Rome.

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But 'twas only one of the ten that were cleansed, who had the gratitude to return and give Glory to God, and thanks to Jesus for his Cure. The rest were so overjoyed when they saw that they were healed; and so much in haste to shew themselves to the Priests, that they might be legally pronounced clean, and restored to Conversation, and apply themselves to their former course of Life; that they forgot their Benefactor, to whom before they cried so loud for help, and doubled their pace to *Jerusalem*.

But could not this have been done time enough after they had given Glory to God and paid their due acknowledgements to Christ? The Priests were easie to be found at any time, but Jesus often changed his Place, and conceal'd himself sometimes; and therefore when he was so near them, and they knew where to find him, had they had truly thankful hearts, they would not have neglected so fair an opportunity of shewing that they had so.

'Tis indeed, too much the way of the World, and that both to God and Man, to be very Earnest and Importunate till we have obtained what we desire; but when our turn is served, we are so taken up with enjoying the Blessing, so transported

sported with what we have receiv'd, so full of the Gift that we forget the Giver. Whereas our Praises should be as Loud and Affectionate as our Prayers were, and our gratitude bear Proportion with our former Importunity. As the Leper here, who when his foul disease kept him at a distance from our Lord, *lift up his voice*, that he might be sure to be heard, and *said Jesus, Master have Mercy on me! When he saw that he was healed turned back and with a loud voice*, likewise glorified God, and *fell down on his face at Jesus's feet*, whom now he might approach being cleansed and gave him thanks.

For how base and unworthy is it, how perfectly selfish, to have no regard to any thing but our own ends, and forget a benefit as soon as we have received it! As if every one was obliged to do his utmost to serve and pleasure us, and then there's an end of the business and we walk off as if beholden to no body!

What an unnatural change is here! From submissive Entreaties, Urgent, Restless Importunity; laying open our wants, and with tears it may be bemoaning our misfortunes; confessing our Inability to help our selves, and flying to another for relief, and it may be promising largely

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what we will do in return : from all this, when we have gained our Point, to come to a few cool dry thanks, or not so much as that, and perhaps to return evil for good ; how monstrous does this look, as if 'twas not the same Person, or else under some ill Influence, and strangely altered into quite another sort of a Creature.

Strangely altered indeed, and no doubt under a very ill Influence ; even that of the worst and most ungrateful of beings, whom the Glory and Happiness of the highest order of Angels could not oblige to Obey and Love, that supream excellence who made him what he was.

Indeed, nothing more resembles a Man to the Devil, than *Ingratitude* ; 'tis made up of the blackest part of his Character, Pride, and Envy, and Self-love, and Hypocrisie ; and is numbred by St. Paul with the most hellish Wickednesses, such as *Blasphemy, Disobedience to Parents, want of natural Affection, Falshood* of all sorts, and *Irreligion* to the highest degree, that of *despising those that are good.* 2 Tim. 3. 2.

Even the very Heathens tell us that ingratitude is a compound of the most hateful Vices ; and Seneca particularly writes very much like St. Paul, when he says that even of *Murderers, Tyrants, Thieves,* Sen. 1. Benef. cap. 10.

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Adulterers, Ravishers, the Sacrilegious, and Traytors; an ungrateful wretch is the worst. Nay all this he says proceeds from an unthankful breast; without which, scarce any detestable Wickedness ever grew up to Perfection.

And 'tis very observable, that when our Lord is recommending that hard Doctrine to Flesh and Blood, of *Loving Enemies, doing good to them that hate us, &c.* He mentions the loving those that love us, and returning one kindness for another, (which in other words is gratitude) as a thing so deeply rooted in Humane Nature that 'tis scarce *thank-worthy*, even the worst of Men having a grateful sense of a benefit; and therefore, he says, Christians should aspire to a more Heroick Pitch of Vertue, and *do good for evil.*

Luk. 6.32,
&c.

What a Monster then is he, who hath no thankful resentment of favours and good turns received, and requites them only with Malice and Ill-will! And yet, such Monsters are but too often met with.

Nay, 'tis not only Unchristian and Inhumane, but even more than *Brutish*; Isa. 1. 2,3. for *the Ox knoweth his owner*, says the Prophet, *and the Ass his Masters Crib, but Israel doth not know, my People doth not Consider.* And therefore, with great reason did he thus exclaim against them,
Hear,

Hear, O Heavens, and give ear O Earth, let the whole Creation be witness of this unnatural baseness, I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me!

And 'tis the height of Injustice too; every benefit obliging not only to a thankful acknowledgement, but a suitable requital according to our Power.

All this, is the common Sense of Mankind, and nothing oftner in our Mouths than Professions of being beholden and bound to one another, for such and such Courtesies and Obligations as we truly call them; and when we have done the kindness, we can remember all this well enough, and cry out as loud against Ingratitude as any, and look upon our selves as greatly injured by it. But for the most part the receivers of a benefit, overlook the obligation that sticks close to it, or a few smooth words is all; forgetting the great rule, *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them.*

'Tis true the acknowledgment of a Debt, is far from the discharge of it, and is seldom accepted as such unless there is nothing to pay; but where there is neither payment, nor acknowledgement, 'tis Base and Provoking indeed: as is

plainly intimated by our Saviour, who when he is magnifying the Mercy of God to the heighth, and proposing it as the pattern of our dealing one with another ;
Luk. 6. 35. says, that our Heavenly Father *is kind even to the unthankful.* As if that were the Perfection of Goodness, none being more unworthy of it than they, nor fitter objects of his Irreconcilable Hatred and Averſion.

So odious we ſee is Ingratitude upon all accounts, and deſervedly deteſted both by God and Man ; and the meek, humble Jeſus took particular notice of it, here in this Miracle, when he ſaid, *Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give Glory to God ſave this ſtranger.*

Not that he was balked of the Praise that was due to himſelf, for that he always wav'd and ſhun'd as much as was poſſible, and was indeed infinitely above being greedy of *receiving honour from Men*; but his concern was for his Divine Fathers Honour, and accordingly 'tis obſervable, that he makes no mention of their Ingratitude to himſelf, but only of their not returning to *give Glory to God.*

Now this ſhews us the excellent temper of our Lord, and which we all of us
should

should endeavour to imitate, in being beyond comparison more tender of Gods Honour than our own, upon account of any good that we have done, because he is the Blessed Principle and Fountain of all good, and we but Instruments, and Channells of Conveyance: And though thanks at least are due to the Instrument and 'tis very ill done to detain them, yet Mens Ingratitude to God will more afflict and wound a Pious Breast, than the greatest Neglects and Sights that can be thrown upon our selves; and our indignation to see so much unthankfulness to him, will very much take off from our resentment of Mens unworthiness to us.

Suppose the Ingrates, as it too often happens are those of our own House, our own Family and Dependents, and it may be our Flesh and Blood, and very few of them are sensible of our continued care and kindness, and so far from endeavouring a requital, that there is not so much as an acknowledgment, and as Christ did in this Miracle, we find more gratitude in Strangers; though this is extreamly Provoking, and base beyond expression, yet Ingratitude to God, as is too visible, always going along with Ingratitude to Men, his Honour we ought to vindicate

in the first place, by endeavouring to create in those we are concern'd with, a grateful Sense towards *him*; and then gratitude to us will come of Course. For though there may be gratitude amongst Men to one another, and little or none to God; yet true gratitude to God, is never unattended with the like to Men.

And were there more of this excellent Vertue in the World how happy would it be! How would Religion flourish towards God, and all kind offices to one another! The business of Life would then be the doing and returning Good; and the smart of Punishment be felt by none but those that extreamly deserve it, because they will do neither.

True Piety would then support and adorn the Church, and an affectionate Obedience the State; and lesser Societies would be Bless'd with all the Pleasures and Advantages of sincere Love and mutual endearment.

'Twas a Noble saying of the great Roman Orator, *Nihil est quod malim, quam me, & Gratum esse & videri*; His great desire was, not only to be grateful, but to make it appear that he was so. For as he goes on, *Gratitude is not only the greatest of Vertues, but the Mother of them all,* which

Cic. Orat.
pro Planc.

which he makes good by several Instances; and then concludes, *Nihil porro tam inhumanum, tam immane, tam ferum, quàm committere, ut Beneficio, non dicam indignus, sed victus esse videâre.* That is, Nothing certainly is more Brutish and Inhumane than so to behave ones self, I won't say as to be thought unworthy of a benefit, but to appear out-done and vanquish'd in the returns of gratitude.

So that 'tis the voice of all the World, Heathen as well as Christian, that he is the very scandal of Humane Nature, whose hand is always greedily stretch'd out to receive, and shut when it should repay. Ecclesiastic. 4. 31.

What therefore, shall we render unto God, for all the benefits he hath done unto us? Psal. 116. which are so innumerable and so great,^{12.} that they are infinitely beyond what we can ever be able to express! Particularly, and above all the rest, how amazing is his Goodness to us, in the Son of his Eternal Love Christ Jesus! Who for us Men and for our Salvation came down from Heaven, and was Incarnate that he might die for Sinners, expiate and atone for their Iniquities, and wash their Leprous Souls in his most Precious Blood!

What Glory is due to the Father of Mercies, what Praise and Thanks to the most Compassionate Jesus, for such unparallel'd, such Wondrous Love as this !

And since the Perfection and fulness of the Divine Nature is infinitely above all requital that we poor Worms can make ; the gratitude of our *Hearts* should swell to the utmost of our capacity, and be continually overflowing in the most Pathetick and Affectionate expressions. Such as those of Holy *David*, *Psal. 103. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless his Holy Name ! Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits ! Who forgiveth all thine Iniquities, and healeth all thy Diseases ; who redeemeth thy Life from Destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender Mercies.*

But though our gracious God is pleas'd to say, *whoso offereth me Thanks and Praise he honoureth me*, yet he expects to be *Honoured with our Substance too* ; and the Poor are deputed his receivers of our just acknowledgements, and what we give to them, he takes as offered to himself.

And if to this, and the fruit of our lips, we add the obedience of our Lives ; a constant care sincerely to perform that Duty which our Great Benefactor hath enjoin'd

enjoin'd us : 'Twill be mercifully accepted, as being our little *all*.

We often cry with the Lepers here, *Jesus, Master, have Mercy on us!* And we know we are heard too by him whose ears are always open to the Prayers of the Miserable; and did we but think our selves as Miserable as indeed we are, and were as much concern'd for the Leprosie of our Souls, as those in the Gospel were for that of their Bodies, our cries would be redoubled, and we should think no Importunity too great; and the merits of Christs Blood, and the hopes God hath given us of Pardon through it, would never be valued enough.

But then, let us beware of being like the *nine*; those ungrateful wretches, whom so great a charity could not oblige to due returns of thanks.

Had they *not* succeeded, their clamours would have been as loud as their *Lord have Mercies*; the Power of Jesus, or his Goodness, would have been called in question; though he cured one, they would have said, he could not cure so many, or else the Pique he took against the rude *Samaritans* put a bar to his Compassion to them, because in so ill a Neighbourhood. For ingratitude is always the most discontented

contented and uneasie upon any disappointment; and those that will be thankful for nothing they have received, are yet the most noisie when any thing is denied them.

I doubt, we are too apt to be so, and complain of hard measure when Providence thinks not fit to gratifie all our fond expectations; and yet, over-look, or very faintly and unfeelingly acknowledge, those many and great Favours which we enjoy already, and even that greatest of all Blessings the inestimable benefaction of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, whose Blood made an Atonement for the Sins of the whole World.

But how base, how unreasonable, and of what fatal Consequence is this! Of what Punishment think ye, says St Paul, shall they be thought worthy, who thus tread underfoot the Son of God, and count the Blood of the Covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy, or common thing, and do despiht to the Spirit of grace! For the Earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and gratefully bringeth forth Herbs meet for them by whom it is dress'd, receiveth blessing from God; but that which after all the culture used upon it, beareth nothing but Thorns and Briers, is rejected,

and

Heb. 10.
29.

nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burn'd.
Heb. 6. 7, 8.

This is the fate of ungrateful Christians, and none can doubt but they are worthy of it; let us therefore with this other good Samaritane (for the Gospel tells us of two, to *Provoke to emulation the Children of the Kingdom*) take care that our thankfulness fall not short of our Impor-
tunity: for if it does, however the nine Ingrates might fare here in the Gospel, which we have no account of, *Our latter end shall certainly be worse than our beginning; the Publicans and Harlots shall go into the Kingdom of God before us, and it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sydon, nay even for Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for us.*

Lu. 10. 30.
Matt. 8.
11, 12.

Matt. 21.

28.

31.

No Miracles of Mercy like to those we have received, and therefore, no ingratitude like ours; and consequently no Punishment greater than we shall then deserve.

All which Avert, O most Compassionate Jesus! *Amen.*

The

The Twelfth Miracle.

A Man made to see, that was born Blind.

J O H N IX. 1, &c.

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a Man which was blind from his birth, &c.

THIS Miracle was a most sensible and surprizing Confirmation of what our Lord had said a little before, *I am the Light of the World, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of Life.* And 'tis very probable that he design'd it as such: for the Pharisees
 — 13. had objected to him, that *he bare record, or witness, of himself, and therefore his record was not true,* to which he answered, *The Father that sent me beareth witness of me;* and then after some further discourse with them, he made it appear that he did so by this amazing Miracle, saying just before he wrought it, *I must work*

work the works of him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh in which no Man can work, (alluding to his approaching Death which he knew they were continually plotting and contriving, and which reflection was occasioned by their late endeavouring to Stone him) and then he repeated almost the same words again as he had done at first, *As long as I am in the World, I am the Light of the World.* Chap. 9.4. V. ult. ch. 8.

Which expressions, though they are to be understood in a sence that is spiritual, so as to mean Christ's enlightning the Souls of Men by the Doctrine of the Gospel, and chasing away the darkness of Error and of Sin; yet must needs be impress'd with greater force upon the mind, by so affecting and lively a representation of the thing they signified, as that of a Mansbeing made to see by him, *which was blind from his Birth.*

So mighty a demonstration of his Divine Power as this was, could not but give the greatest Weight and Authority to all that he should say, and engage Men seriously to ponder and reflect upon it. And the Miracle being so exactly suited to what he had been discoursing, as to be an exemplification of that in the Body, which he told them he came to effect upon

on the Soul ; it must needs cause in them a very quick and clear apprehension of the thing, and set their thoughts on work upon it with great Vigour and Affection.

Verf. 32.

Since the World began, as this poor Man truly said, *It was never heard that any Man open'd the Eyes of one that was born Blind* : Nothing less than a *Creative Power* could make new Organs of sight, (that noble Sense, to which an exact Harmony of so many curious Parts are requisite) or supply the defects of nature in the first formation of the *Eye* ; which yet was necessary to be done to make one see, that was blind from his Birth.

And therefore Jesus, when he apply'd himself to work this wondrous Cure, *Spat upon the ground, and made clay of the Spit-sle, and therewith covered the Eyes of the blind man* ; not as by way of *Medicine* to be sure, for what *Virtue* can be conceived in clay for such a purpose as this, which is rather apt to deprive of sight than to create it where it never was ? But 'twas design'd to shew in that *emblematical* way which was usual with the Prophets, that nothing less than that Almighty Power which fashioned the admirable frame of Man's *Body* of clay at first, could be sufficient to make eyes where nature had made none,

none, and render that compleat which she had made imperfect : None could do this but that Divine *Architect* who first contriv'd and rais'd this wondrous Building, and *in whose book are all our Members written.* Psal. 139.
16.

No doubt but all that saw our Lord cover the blind Man's eyes with clay, and those that met him going thus to the Pool of *Siloam* to wash, wondered at it, and were in great expectation of what would follow ; and the Man himself too, must needs be full of thought about it, and had it not been Jesus that commanded him to go (of whose Fame a constant beggar at the Temple, as this blind Man was, could not but have heard, we may believe he would not have obey'd so readily. But when he had wash'd off the clay, and came back seeing, then it plainly appeared that the Omnipotent Power of God was communicated to Jesus, and the meaning of his anointing the Mans eyes with clay, was by every considering Man easily discernible, and likewise of his sending him to *Siloam* to wash it off ; for that Pool was looked upon by the *Jews* as an emblem of the *Messias*, and signified *sent*, which was his title who was the *Shiloh*, that is, *the sent of God* : And it was natural

tural to conclude from the whole, that he who could confirm his Doctrine by such a Miracle as this, must be the then expected Christ; who was to be a light
 Luk. 2.32. *to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of*
 Isa. 9. 2. *God's People Israel.* As was said of him in
 a Heavenly rapture by devout Simeon,
 42----6. according to divers Prophecies of old con-
 49----6. cerning him; and who, together with all
 the Pious and Learned of that Nation, at
 60--1, &c. that time *waited for the consolation of*
 62---1. *Israel.*
 Luk. 2.25.

To confirm the truth then, of his be-
 Mal. 3. 1. *ing the light of the World, and the Messen-*
ger of the Covenant, we see was his design
 in working this great Miracle; and we
 have seen how apt it was to create in Men
 a Belief in him as such, suiting so exactly
 with antient Prophecies, and expressing
 to the Life the Office of the Messias,
 which was to *cleanse* and to *enlighten*; and
 hinting his very *title* too, so that those
 must be strangely inapprehensive who
 were not mightily affected with it. But
 it was not wrought for their conviction
 only in whose times our Saviour lived,
 but also for our confirmation and instru-
 ction upon whom the last ages of the
 World are come; and the relation of it
 will afford us several useful observations.

And

And first, we find the Disciples asking our Lord when they saw him look wistfully upon this blind Beggar, *Master, who did Sin this Man or his Parents, that he was born Blind?* Which question was grounded upon an opinion then very current both with the *Jews* and *Heathens*, of the *Praeexistence*, and *Transmigration of Souls*; that is, that the Souls of Men were in a state of being before they came to be joined to Bodies here in this World, and as they then behaved themselves well or ill, were put into well or ill temper'd, perfect or defective Bodies, according to their former deservings: And afterwards, upon the Death of those first Bodies shifted to a better or a worse, and so on, as they themselves improved in goodness or degenerated from it. And consequently they looked upon a deform'd imperfect Body, as an argument of the Sinfulness and Degeneracy of the Soul that was in it; and we find the *Pharisees* afterwards reproaching this poor Man, as if he was altogether born in his Sins, and his bodily Blindness shewed the Darkness and Ignorance, and Vileness of his mind. And therefore 'twas, that the Disciples curiosity put them upon asking their Master, whether 'twas the Wickedness of the Mans

own Soul that occasioned his uncomfortable want of sight from his very Birth; or whether 'twas brought upon him by any Sin of his Parents, whom they believed God sometimes Punished for some particular and extraordinary Wickednesses, by laying bodily Distempers upon their off-spring; and which Distempers too, might in a great measure be caused in a natural way, by the Parents Sins.

To this question, our Lord answers, without saying any thing for or against the opinions upon which it was built (by which we may suppose there is no great harm in them, how little soever there may be of truth) *Neither hath this Man sinned nor his Parents*, that is, so as to bring this heavy misfortune upon him, but *that the works of God might be manifested in him*; as if he had said, "God was pleased it should be so, that I might have an opportunity of shewing the Divine Power he hath communicated to me, in order to my convincing the World that he hath sent me to be the Christ and Saviour of Mankind.

Now from this answer we may observe, that even *uncommon* Calamities, are not always sent as *Judgments*; but God may have other great and gracious ends to serve

serve by them. And therefore, it becomes us to be very cautious what conclusions we make of any Mans being more than ordinary wicked because more than ordinary unhappy, lest we rashly and uncharitably pass Sentence upon those that don't deserve it, and perhaps may be much better than our selves.

For though God sometimes takes Vengeance upon Notorious and Irreclaimable Sinners in so remarkable a manner, that Men cannot but acknowledge it to be his doing; and his merciful design in it is that others may see, and fear, and do no more pre-^{Dent. 17:}
^{13.} sumptuously; yet we must first be well assured of such their Wickedness, before we pronounce the calamities they lie under to be judgments.

'Tis a very false way of reasoning to argue from the greatness of Mens troubles to the proportionable greatness of their Sins, as being directly contrary to the Holy Scriptures, which tell us that *Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourgeth every Son whom he receives, and that many are the troubles of the righteous, and the like, and also to the usual method of Providence in his disposals here below.*

For this Life is to be considered as a state of Probation, or tryal in order to
Y 2 another;

another ; and therefore when God, who best knows what are the properest methods to fit and prepare us for that Happiness which he designs for us hereafter, finds it needful as our circumstances are at Present, to exercise the passive Virtues of Patience and Submission and Self-denial, and which can't be done but by Affliction ; those Afflictions are as widely different from Judgments, as Love is from Hatred, Mercy from Vengeance, Happiness from Destruction, and the rod of an affectionate and tender Parent from the Sword of an unrelenting Executioner.

Besides, God often designs the troubles of good Men for the benefit of others as well as of themselves ; that great examples may be given to the World of the noblest Fortitude and Courage, the most undaunted Bravery, and unshaken Constancy in a righteous cause, to the immortal Honour of that most excellent Religion which can infuse such true greatness of Spirit into the Professors of it : and consequently, such troubles as these, are so far from Judgments, that they are rather the occasion of the most glorious and most useful Triumphs.

Further

Further yet, God may lay many and great misfortunes, as we call them, upon good Men, to demonstrate to the World his Sovereign Power over all things in the unexpected and surprizing removal of them; and thereby, at once, manifest his own Glory, improve and reward his servants Vertue, and encourage all Men to persevere in their Integrity, and Patience, and assured reliance upon his over-ruling Providence, even in the blackest state of things; who can when ever he pleaseth *bring light out of darkness*, and make the most dismal melancholy Circumstances, clear up unaccountably, into the greatest Happiness and Prosperity.

Of this *Job* was a very memorable Instance, whose calamities were so great, and came so thick upon him, that his unworthy Friends censured him most severely, as ^{Job 4. 7;} one of the worst of Men; they plainly ^{&c.} told him 'twas Gods just Judgment upon ^{22. 5.} him, who would never afflict any Man as he afflicted him, unless he extreamly deserved it. And yet, in the conclusion, God himself gave testimony to his Servant *Job* that he was righteous, and sharply rebuked those that had passed such hard and unjust censures upon him, and com-

manded them to intreat him to offer Sacrifice and Prayers for them, *For him will I accept*; and then doubled upon him all his former wealth and greatness, and made him happier than *ever*. Job chap. the last.

Thus we see, God hath various ends in laying troubles upon particular Persons which are of a nature vastly different from Judgments; so that we should be very cautious, as I said, how we call any misfortunes by that name, which happen to our neighbours, and it may be continue long upon them too, since nothing but very great and apparent Wickedness will give just ground to pronounce any *particular* Mans affliction to be a Judgment sent him of God in Anger.

But as for the calamities of a Nation, the case is otherwise; and a People that are over-whelm'd with misery, may and ought to conclude that they are likewise *heavy laden with Iniquity*. For this World is the place of Reward and Punishment for States and Kingdoms; and tho' we cannot say every prosperous Nation is righteous, yet we may safely say that every unhappy Nation is wicked: And we may say too, and it shall surely come to pass, that every wicked Nation shall in time be miserable, and every righteous Nation

Nation soon become Glorious and Happy, and continue to be so, as long as it is righteous.

Esa. i. per
Tot.
Jer. 18. 7,
8, 9, 10.

Wherefore, instead of making too nice enquiries into the causes of other Mens misfortunes, and passing rash and uncharitable censures upon them when groaning under any great and uncommon affliction; let us employ our selves in a diligent search into the iniquity of our own hearts, and an impartial tryal of our own ways and doings: that so, by a timely discovery and amendment of what God hates, we may prevent the falling of his Just vengeance upon our selves; and the troubles which at any time he shall exercise us with may be an expression, not of his fierce anger, but his fatherly affection, that the wondrous Works of his mercy may be manifested in us.

And so shall we contribute to the welfare of the Publick too; and would every one by sincere repentance endeavour to avert Gods Judgments from himself, 'twould be a great step towards the removal of those which we may justly fear do still hang over the Nation. For though we have already drunk deep of the Cup of Gods fury, yet being still as daringly wicked, if not much more so than ever;

we must expect at length to suck out the very dregs of it, unless both a particular and national repentance happily prevent it.

And never was there greater reason than now, to pray with all possible earnestness in the words of our excellent litaney; *Remember not, Lord, our Iniquities, nor the Iniquities of our Fore-father, neither take thou vengeance of our Sins; spare us, good Lord, spare thy People, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious Blood, and be not angry with us for ever!*

As for the Poor beggar here that was born Blind, he was a true emblem of sinful Mankind; and the miraculous cure Jesus wrought upon his dark Body, was a lively representation of his enlightning our benighted Souls.

Gen. 3.

Since the fall of our first Parents we are all *born Blind* to Heavenly and Spiritual things, as the just Punishment of their desire of forbidden knowledge, and presumptuous aspiring to be *wise as Gods*. The tempting Serpent had assured them that upon eating of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, their Eyes should be open'd to know good and evil, by which we may suppose they understood an universal knowledge; and being too easie of belief, ventured

tured to try the fatal experiment, and immediately found his words too true in the worst Sence, for the eyes of them both were open'd indeed, but 'twas to see their Nakedness, their Misery and Shame.

Their knowledge of *evil* was improved to a large, but dismal Prospect, and the increase of it was truly *the increase of Sorrow*; but as for *good*, in all respects they knew much less of it than ever, *Sin* presently drew a thick cloud over their understandings, depriv'd them of the bright intercourse they had with the wise Inhabitants of Heaven and the God of Truth, and entangled them in an inextricable maze of error and confusion; as perplexing as the briars and thorns which over-run the face of the then cursed earth, but of much worse consequence, and harder to be rooted out.

Eccles. i.
ult.

From that sad time, the common necessary food, of the mind as well as of the body, was to be acquir'd with the sweat of our brows; and had not the Father of lights in Pity to our disconsolate and dangerous state, been pleased sometimes to afford a lucid ray from above, none knows what progress Ignorance and Wickedness might have made by this time?

But

But our gracious Creator, who in undeserved Mercy design'd the recovery of Mankind, by little and little restored to them the light which they had lost, in revelations to the Patriarchs to *Moses* and the Prophets; and then, at last, when the fulness of time was come, the *Sun of righteousness arose with healing under his wings*: And God, who in the first Creation commanded the light by degrees to shine out of darkness, and at length made the great Luminaries of Heaven to shed a glorious lustre, and kind influences upon the Earth; *Hath now shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. The true and Primitive Light now shineth in its full brightness*; the Lamb of God that took away the Sins of the World, hath chas'd away the darkness of it too, and is become *The light that enlighteneth every Man, and whosoever followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

2 Cor. 4.6. Revel. 21. 23. Joh. 8. 12.

And this gradual restoration of spiritual light to the dark World, was not obscurely represented by our Lord in his gradual cure of the blind Man, *Mar. 8. 22.* By the first laying of his hands upon him, he gave him only an imperfect sight; the Man saw indeed, but 'twas confusedly, those

those that walked about appeared to him like so many *moving trees*: But when Jesus had put his hand on him a second time, he perfected the Cure, and *made him look up, and see every Man clearly and distinctly*. Not that he was unable to restore him at the first, for we find, *Matt. 9. 27.* he Cur'd two blind Men immediately by his touch, and *Matt. 20. 30.* two others with his word, and created new Organs of Vision for this Man here that was born Blind; but, as with great probability we may conjecture, it was to represent to us the dimness of that Spiritual light which God afforded to the Sinful World at first, in comparison with that full *Meridian* splendor of it which flow'd from *him*.

And may we be duly sensible of the inestimable Blessing; and shew our selves to be Children of the day, by rejoicing exceedingly in the return of so glorious a light, after so long a time of pitchy darkness, and *the shadow of Death*!

None can love darkness more than light *Joh. 3. 19.* but those whose deeds are evil; who are afraid of the unwelcome discovery of Sins they have no mind to part with, and a duty they don't intend to practise; especially since the same light that shews them their Sins

Sins shews them the intolerable Punishment of them too, if not immediately forsaken; and when it acquaints them with their Duty, assures them likewise, that he who *knows his Lords will and*
 Lu. 12.47. *doth it not shall be beaten with many stripes.*

Were it not for the obligation that is laid upon every Man of being *led* and *guided* by this Heavenly light, of casting away the works of darkness and following our bright leader in the Paths of Holiness; the light would not be so offensive as it is, nor such complaints made of its being too dazzling for mortal eyes; and Men would be well enough pleas'd with the Theory of Religion, at least would not so hate and oppose it as most do, were they but left to their liberty in the Practice of it.

But because it requires them to be Virtuous and Good, not to doat upon the World, but wean themselves more and more from it, to avoid sensuality, and prepare for Heaven by Meditation and Prayer, and a Holy Life; therefore it is that they pick quarrels with it, give it ill-names, call it Unintelligible and Impossible, the Invention of a few designing Men, and shut their eyes hard against it, resolving to *know* but little of it, and to
Practise

Practise less; as thinking it too hard a bargain to purchase even Heavenly knowledge at so dear a rate as the ruine of their old Darling Vices.

But, Lord, what brutishness is this! And what a dreadful *Condemnation* will it bring upon us in the Conclusion? Joh. 3.19,
&c.

How should we rather in the words of the Blessed Apostle, humbly beg that *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give unto us, more and more, the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of our understanding being thoroughly enlightened, we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the Glory of the Inheritance of the Saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his Power to usward that believe, that we may see the things which belong to our Peace before they be hid from our eyes,* Ephes. 1.
17. devoutly Contemplate those Wonders of Mercy which the very *Angels* with admiration desire to look into, and know the unfathomable, *Love of Christ which passeth, or* Ephes. 3.
19. Infinitely exceeds all other knowledge.

And because *God beareth not Sinners*, but such only as sincerely *Worship him and do his Will*; let us add Obedience to our Prayers, and Love to our Wonder, and Humility and Repentance to our Joy, and

and compleat all with such a Faith as that of the blind Man here, which will confess and adhere to this Divine Light of our Souls and the truths he hath made known to us, in times of greatest discouragement and danger.

So will our minds grow daily brighter and brighter, more quick sighted and distinctly apprehensive of the great things of God; so shall we be secur'd from dangerous and destructive errors, and taught all needful knowledge by the Spirit of Truth: Till at length we *shall see face to face and know even as we are known*, and he who is now our *light* will then become our *Salvation*.

But as Jesus, after he had besmear'd the blind Man's eyes with clay, (to shew what *then* and *always* made Men blind to Religion and true Goodness) sent him to the Pool of *Siloam* to wash it off, upon doing which he presently received sight; so we must have a care of sordid earthly Affections, and a too great intimacy with the World. For an inordinate Love and Desire of its Wealth and Greatness, too free an enjoyment of its Pleasures and eager pursuit of any Worldly good, will insensibly bring a cloud again between our minds and Spiritual objects, so that they

they will make but very faint and imperfect impressions upon us; which will cause them to be every day less and less regarded, till at length our *foolish hearts will be quite darkned*, and grow as *vain in their imaginations*, and *vile in their affections* as ever.

And therefore, 'twill not be enough that we have been once enlightned by the grace of God in Baptism, that fountain of Divine Illumination; unless we make it our watchful care, to prevent the return of that fatal blindness which the God of this World takes all opportunities to bring upon us.

St. Paul tells us that the *natural Man*, 1 Cor. 2.
 or one that is wholly taken up with ^{14.}
 things relating to the Body and the Animal Life, *Receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discern'd*, as an eye that is quite clos'd up remains in darkness, even when the Sun shines round about it. *But he that is Spiritual*, whose Conversation is in Heaven, and the eye of his mind employ'd in contemplating the glorious objects of Religion, improving by daily use and exercise that light which God in Mercy hath afforded him; *he discerneth all things.* That
 which

which to others is obscure and unintelligible is clear to him; his mind is duly prepar'd for the reception of all Divine truth, there is nothing to hinder its free entrance into his Soul, or to make him uneasy when it is there, but all is Bright, and Cheerful, and Serene, and every thing appears to him distinct and lively, with all its charms about it, as the beauties of the spring do to a strong clear Eye.

But nothing can fully represent the unspeakable satisfaction of a Holy Soul enlightned from above; and when a Heavenly gleam breaks in upon it, and fills it with a *bright warmth*, a grateful flow of Spiritual Knowledge, and Love, and Joy; the Pleasure it then feels is too much like that of Heaven to admit of a description.

And if one single ray from *the Father of lights* can cause such transports in us, what will the *fulness* of his Glory do,
 1 Joh. 3. 2. *when we shall see him as he is?*

— 3. But *He that hath this hope, must Purify himself as God is Pure. For what Communion hath light with darkness?* How can a Man expect such Divine favours as these, who does all he can to make himself incapable of them? Who puts a covering
of

of *thick clay* before his Eyes, and is intent upon nothing but earth and sense, and that, too often, for this very reason, that he may enjoy the works of darkness without disturbance? *For he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to it, lest his works should be reprov'd.* A man must be prepar'd for the reception even of that constant light of Instruction in the necessary Truths of Religion, which, Blessed be God, we all of us plentifully enjoy, and which will do but very little good, unless all sensual obstructions are remov'd; how much more then must he be prepar'd for extraordinary Illuminations, by frequent fervent Prayer; retirement from the World, and a generous contempt of it; and lay his Soul wide open by contemplation, and holy delires, and devout breathings Heaven-ward, for the reception of those marks of God's peculiar Affection, which he bestows upon those only, who have made him the object of their intirest Love. But to proceed.

As soon as this amazing Miracle was known, we may be sure it was the Subject of every ones discourse; and those that had observ'd this blind Beggar constantly sitting at the gate of the Temple, and asking the alms of good People that

Z

went

went in and out, were much surpriz'd to meet him walking about with perfect sight, and could hardly believe their own eyes that it was he.

But some were confident it *was* he, *others said he is like him*, which he over-hearing, put them out of all doubt, and said I am he. "I am that once sad object
"of your Pity and Compassion, who from
"my Mothers Womb was always in un-
"comfortable darkness; Helpless and
"Poor, and fit for nothing but to move
"Mens bowels, to commiserate and re-
"lieve a Wretch so miserable. But now
"I am so happy as to know what it is to
"see, and with delightful wonder look
"about me, upon this strange variety of
"things which are all new to me, and
"continually remind me of the won-
"drous Power and Goodness of him who
"gave me sight.

Upon this, they ask'd him *how his eyes were open'd?* And were still more amaz'd when he told them, *A Man that is called Jesus, made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the Pool of Siloam and wash, and I did so, and returned back seeing.*

When this had reach'd the Ears of the Pharisees, who but a little before were so enrag'd against Jesus for his exposing their Ignorance

Ignorance and Hypocrisie to the People, that they attempted to Stone him even in the Temple; we may imagine what unwelcome news it was, how it touch'd their envious Souls down to the quick, and set their Heads immediately on work, either to disprove or stifle a report, which tended so much to the Honour of Jesus, and their own disgrace.

And accordingly they order'd the Man, on whom the Miracle was said to be wrought, to be immediately brought before them, and began to question him close, as we may read in the sequel of this chapter; and sent for his Parents also to enquire of them whether their Son was really born Blind, and whether this was he; and when the matter of fact appeared plain beyond contradiction, then they fly to their old baffled Cavil, and say, If Jesus did it, it must be done by some evil Arts, and not by the assistance of God, because it was wrought on the Sabbath day, for God would never enable so great a Sinner as made no account of the Sacred rest of the Sabbath to work such a Miracle as that. And therefore, they cunningly endeavour to perswade the Man rather to believe that 'twas God's *Immediate* goodness to him, and that Jesus

had no hand in it at all, and Hypocritically advise him to give God the Glory.

But the Poor Man was so sensible of the great Blessing Jesus had confer'd upon him, that he would not be brought to have any ill opinion of his benefactor ; but boldly said to their Faces that he believed him to be a *Prophet*, and intimated his resolution of being his Disciple. And when they revil'd him for it, and objected to him the meanness and obscurity of Jesus, as a fellow that came no body knew from whence, and had no authority for what he did ; he gave them this excellent return, which the wisest of them were not able to answer, *Why herein is a marvellous thing that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not Sinners, but if any Man be a worshipper of God and doth his will, him he heareth. Since the World began was it not heard, that any Man open'd the Eyes of one that was born Blind,* and then he concludes, *If this Man were not of God he could do nothing.*

Verf. 17.

Verf. 27.

— 28.

— 29.

Verf. 30,
&c.

And a Marvellous thing it was indeed, that such a Miracle as this, so thoroughly attested beyond all doubt ; should not be able to conquer their prejudices, and convince them of his Divine Mission, and the

the truth of his Doctrine, that he was not an arrogant pretender but the promised Saviour. And when the Messiah was about that time so generally expected, and Jesus, besides speaking so as never Man spake, as their own Officers confessed, whom they sent to take him, doing such Wonders as no Man before ever did, and of the same nature too with those which 'twas Prophefied the Messiah should work, and greater than which he could not work when he came, as many of the People had before acknowledged: 'twas very strange indeed, that they should still persist in their unbelief and resolve upon his ruine.

But see the Power of Envy, and Pride, and an Inordinate love of the World! They could not endure to see a Poor obscure young Man cry'd up before them, and to be publickly reprov'd by him, and non-plus'd in all their discourses with him; especially since his Doctrine tended to clip their greatness, and spoil the gainful trade they drove of enriching themselves by imposing upon the People, and promised nothing to those that should embrace it but a few dry *Spiritual* Blessings, and such rewards after Death as did not at all suit with their Notions of Happiness,

ness, to whom a *Mahometan* paradise would have been more agreeable than a Christian Heaven.

Had our Lord declared, that it was his design to advance the *Jewish* Nation to the height of worldly Grandeur, had his discourses run all that way, and his Promises been of that kind; then the Miracle he wrought to confirm them would have been received with the greatest applause, and magnified, if possible, beyond what they deserved. Then, his youth and the obscurity and meanness of his birth would have been no objection against him, but rather improved into arguments of his being more than a Man, a second and more glorious *David*, whose Blooming years would make him the more capable of bringing so mighty a work to Perfection. And his very reproofs too, would then have been thought an Honour, and received with Humility and Reverence and the profoundest regard, in hopes that it might turn to account hereafter, when he should have recovered the Throne of his great Ancestors, and restored again the Kingdom to Israel.

But there was nothing to be got, they thought, by one that had not where to lay
his

his head, and who Preached up nothing but Poverty of Spirit, and contempt of the World, and self-denial, and hungering and thirsting after Righteousness, and the like, and foretold what Troubles they must undergo that believed in him. There was small comfort in this to a haughty worldly-minded Pharisee, and a wealthy Ruler, who were for any thing that would improve their Honours, and their Fortunes, but could by no means relish a Poor Messias, whose Kingdom was not of this World.

This it was that gave quite another turn to all that Jesus said or did; this was the great *stumbling block and rock of offence*, that which made their prejudices so invincible, and sower'd them into Envy and Malice, and caused them to overlook all the Proofs that he offered to them of his being the Messias, because they were resolved before hand not to admit of the conclusion. And therefore the more unanswerable the Proofs were, the more were they exasperated against him, and more obstinately set themselves to oppose his Doctrine and vilifie his Person. The clearer the evidence was on his side, the harder did they shut their Eyes and stop their Ears against it, *lest at any time*, as

our Lord said, *They should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted and I should heal them.*

Matth. 13
15.

Thus we see the true reason, why so few of the Rulers and Pharisees believed on Jesus, why *not many rich, not many mighty were called*, that is, so effectually as to be won upon by him to give themselves up to his Service; there was a thick crust of earth before their eyes, an excessive Love of these Perishing things here below, whereby *The God of this World blinded the eyes of those that believed not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine in unto them.*

2 Cor. 4. 4.

And here lies the danger still. Still the World is too apt to intercept our sight of Heaven, and consequently to make us regardless of the way that leads to it; still the Body is ready to Blind the Soul, and draw it into fatal errors and mistakes, and wicked foolish choices that will be its ruine. Still Pleasure, Wealth, and Honour carry it against Jesus, and his Divine Religion, which is still, as its great Author was, *rejected and despised of Men, who can see no beauty in it that they should desire it.* How careful should we be therefore, to watch against and check this

this growing evil, which insensibly steals upon us ere we are aware! To wean our selves still more and more from what we have hitherto loved but too too much, and will, if we continue to do so, make us at last so extremely Miserable, that *'twould have been good for us if we never had been born.*

The case of a Christian that minds nothing but the World, is really worse even than that of the *Pharisees*; for after we have solemnly renounced its Poms and Vanities in Baptism, and Professed our selves Disciples of Jesus, and Candidates for Heaven, where we say our Inheritance and our Treasure is, and that here we have no continuing City but seek one to come in the Kingdom of God above; after all this to live in direct opposition to our Faith, and take little or no thought about Heaven but lay out all our endeavours here below, give the things of this earth the chief Room, nay too often an intire possession of our Affections, and absolute Command of all our faculties, to an utter exclusion of God and Religion, or at least such continual neglects, as are next door to it: What can be said for this? Which yet is so generally the Practice, that very few can with good Conscience

2 Pet. 2.
21.

science say, 'tis otherwise with *them*. St. Peter says, *It had been better for such, not to have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them.* And what our Blessed Saviour said to those wilfully Blind Pharisees may be truly applied to a worldly-minded Christian, *if ye were blind*, and really Ignorant of better things, *ye should have no Sin; but now ye say we see*, pretend to Spiritual knowledge and Heavenly hopes and expectations, and yet live an Irreligious, Carnal, Brutish Life, *therefore your sin remaineth.* The guilt is fixed upon you, and so, without a speedy and a deep Repentance, will be the Dreadful Punishment.

Joh. 9. ult.

Now, when the Pharisees had gone as far as they could by threatnings to bring the Man that was born Blind from ascribing his wondrous Cure to Jesus, but without Success; and were confounded by his surprizingly smart answers, and resolute Confession of his belief that Jesus was a Prophet; they betook them to their last refuge, according to an Agreement they had made before, and after reproaching him with being Born in his Sins upon the account of the Blindness he brought

Joh. 9. 22.

brought into the World with him, (which we said something to at the beginning of this Discourse) they cast him out of their Synagogue or excommunicated him. Which was so severe and shameful a Punishment with the Jews, that they very much dreaded it, and would do almost any thing that they might avoid it.

But, *When Jesus heard that they had cast him out*, lest the Man should be too much shock'd by this hard usage, *He sought him out, and when he had found him, he said unto him, dost thou believe on the Son of God, the Promised Messias? Art thou ready to profess thy Faith in him and become his Disciple? He answered and said, who is he, Lord, that I should, or might believe on him? I am most willing when I know him to acknowledge him. Then Jesus made himself known to him, and said, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. As if he had said, "I who gave to thee thy sight, and "made thee able to behold the Christ, "am now come to enlighten thy mind as "well as thy body, and reveal to thee "this great and saving Truth, that I am "he, I am that Light of the World in whom "whosoever believeth shall have the light of "Life Eternal.*

Upon

Upon this, the Man immediately said, *Lord, I Believe*; and as a token of his sincerity, and an expression of that reverential awe which was upon his Soul when in the Presence of the Son of God, *He worshipped him*, or threw himself down at his feet in the most humble posture of Adoration.

Thus did the Blessed Jesus take care to Confirm and Strengthen this his first Confessor. And as 'tis highly probable that those quick and weighty returns which a Man so ignorant as he must needs have been, had before made to the ensnaring Questions and Cavils of the *Pharisees*, were suggested to him by the Holy Ghost, according to our Lords express Promise to the Apostles and others that should be *brought before Kings and Rulers for his Names sake, that it should be given them in that same hour what they should speak, and they should have such a Mouth and Wisdom as all their Adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist, for it should not be they that should speak, but the Spirit of their Heavenly Father speaking in them*: so his boldly affirming Jesus to be a Prophet, before he knew that he was the Christ, and stoutly Vindicating his Honour against the Aspersions of the Jews, and persisting to do

Lu. 21.15.

Matt. 10.
19, 20.

do so till he was revil'd and excommunicated by them ; this inclin'd our Lord to fix and secure his Faith, by plainly telling him that he was *the Son of God*, and thereby encouraging him to confess him with still greater Resolution, and to bear up under whatever sufferings might hereafter come upon him for his sake.

And whoever will be faithful to his Saviour in firmly adhering to him and his Truth, when opposed by an Irreligious and Wicked World ; may depend upon it, that his Saviour will be always ready to support and stand by *him*, and enable him to undergo the greatest tryals that can be laid upon him. He will inspire him with such a noble resolution, as will carry him undauntedly through the greatest discouragements and difficulties ; and fill his Soul with such Divine refreshments, and give him such an enravishing prospect of those Heavenly Joys which are ready to crown his Constancy, that even Death it self though in its most terrifying shapes, shall not be able to affright him from it.

Thus we read of *St. Stephen*, the first that lost his Life for the Testimony of Christ, that *being full of the Holy Ghost* Ac. 7. 55
he

59. *he looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing at his right hand, as ready to comfort him in his last Agonies, and take him to himself; and when he was just expiring under a shower of stones, with great calmness and serenity and Heavenly Joy, He recommended his Soul to his Redeemers Mercy, saying Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit!*

And with what bravery did the Apostles bear up against the united Malice both of Jews and Gentiles; Rejoycing that
 Act. 5.41. *they were accounted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ, and laying down their Lives for him as readily and as calmly as we go to sleep!*

And in like manner the Noble Army of Confessors and Martyrs ever since, endured such things, as would make us tremble to hear the bare relation of, not only with unshaken Patience, but a triumphant cheerfulness and joy.

All which was through the aid of the Holy Spirit of God, who
 Eph. 3.16. *Strengthned them mightily in the Inner Man, and made such strong and lively impressions upon their Souls of Love to Jesus, and of the transcendent Excellency of that*

that Recompence of Reward which he had Prepared for them above; that every thing seemed Light, and Short, and Rom. 8.35. Easie, which would bring them to the Possession of it, and lead them to the Everlasting embraces of their Saviour.

Nor is he less present now, nor ever will be to support with the same supernatural Consolations, and Inspirit with the same Courage and Holy Magnanimity those that are sincerely his Disciples, and *are not ashamed of him and his Words*, but are true to both, in any *Adulterous and Sinful Generation*. Mar. 8.38. His care of the Church and every sound Member of it, is always the same; and none ever did or shall suffer in his Cause, but he is ready to uphold them with his Everlasting Arms, and Carry them through to Victory.

Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the Will of God Commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well doing as to a Faithful Creator; who will never forsake those that bravely engage themselves in the Defence of his Honour, and Contend earnestly for his Holy Faith: And those that continue I Pet. 4.

Rev. 2.10.

Jam. 1.12.

tinue Faithful unto Death shall certainly receive the Crown of Life which our Lord hath Promised to them that Love him.

The

The Thirteenth Miracle.

*Lazarus rais'd from the Dead
after four days Burial.*

JOHN XI. 1.

*Now a certain Man was sick named Lazarus
of Bethany, the Town of Mary and her
Sister Martha, &c.*

THIS Bethany, where Martha and Mary and Lazarus dwelt, was a Village near Jerusalem, to which our Lord used often to go when in those Parts, as a convenient retreat from the noise and hurries of the City; and the two Sisters and their Brother, being of the number of those that believed on him, were always glad to entertain him, that they might enjoy his Heavenly conversation with Privacy and Freedom, and no doubt thought themselves happier in such a guest, than all the World besides could make them. And if his *Publick Discour-*

ses were so charming, and that even to his Enemies, and rough Officers that came on Purpose to apprehend him, that they had no Power to take him but went away full of his Praise and Admiration; what may we think they were in *Private*, when the endearments of Friendship were added to them, and those good People had their Saviour to themselves?

Their hospitable treatment of him was abundantly rewarded by every minute of his Presence with them, and every word he spake; as still the Company of a Person of Wisdom and Goodness, though his outward Circumstances are as mean as those of Jesus, makes ample recompence where e're he comes, for whatever kindness and respect is shewn him.

Now when the time of that Pass-over drew near at which Jesus was to be the Immaculate Lamb, whose Blood should avert Gods vengeance, atone for guilty Mankind, and take away the Sins of the World, his Friend *Lazarus* was Sick; and his Sisters seeing the Distemper violent upon him, sent Messengers to their Divine Friend and never Failing Physician, who was then retired into *Galilee*, to acquaint him with it, and bid them say, *Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is Sick.*

Which

Which moving message they thought would be sufficient to hasten Jesus to them, whose tender and compassionate Nature made him very ready to succour all that were in Danger and Distress; much less therefore would he need great entreaty to come to his sick *Lazarus* whom he so dearly loved.

And no doubt but he would immediately have went, had it not been more for the Glory of God that his Friends Sickness should Proceed to Death, than that a stop should be put to it though by a Miraculous Cure. For indeed, though it was designed that *Lazarus* should die of this illness, and therefore Jesus did not go to heal him, but staid where he was, notwithstanding his great Love to him, till he knew that he was Dead; yet as Christ told his Disciples, *This sickness was not unto Death, as Men commonly Die, that is Irrecoverably to any second Life here in this World, But for Gods Glory, and that that the Son of Man might be Glorified thereby,* when he should demonstrate his Almighty Power in raising him to Life again in so amazing a manner, as we find he did in the sequel of this story.

And therefore, when two days after he told them that *Lazarus slept, and that*

he would go and awake him (by which as he signified his being Dead, so he likewise signified that he should not long be so) and upon their not apprehending his true meaning, said to them plainly *Lazarus is Dead*; he withal tells them that *for their sakes he was glad he was not there*, to prevent his Dying, *to the intent that they might believe*, that is, be Confirmed beyond all doubt in their Faith in him as the true Messias, and in the belief of what he had not long before discoursed to them concerning his own and the General Resurrection, by that glorious Miracle which he would shortly work upon their deceased Friend.

Now this train of Providence, in bringing that Sickness upon *Lazarus*, and Jesus though he had express notice of his danger, and the desire he had to see him, yet regarding it less than he used to do that of meer strangers, and delaying to go to him for the space of two Days, though he was two Days Journey from him, and this on purpose that he might be Dead before he came: All this seeming hardship upon *Lazarus*, and unkind neglect in Jesus of one he loved so well, (which could not but appear very strange to his two Sisters, and made them with tears,

tears, when they saw him next, ascribe their Brothers Death to his not coming when they sent him word that he was Sick) all this being only in order to the great ends but now mentioned, and at last causing greater Joy to the good Family than ever they felt before; should teach us intirely to acquiesce in all God's disposals, how harsh and unpromising soever they may look at present, in full assurance that the Conclusion will be happy, and oblige us to acknowledge that all things were ordered for the best.

For, as God is too wise, to do or permit any thing without some ends in doing or permitting it, so all his ends are great and good; and what to us may seem to come by accident, is ordered and disposed by him to excellent Purposes, and those very things which in all outward appearance look like an unkind neglect of Providence, do often prove the noblest expressions of God's Care and Love.

And therefore though the order and method of his Government is concealed from us, and we may wonder at such and such steps of it, and be tempted to complain and expostulate with God about them, and think it hard that he does not grant us this and that reasonable request;

yet let us but reflect how extreamly Ignorant and short sighted we Poor Creatures are, how apt to mistake our best Interest, and the means of promoting it, and how Infinite God's Wisdom is, and his Goodness and Love to us no less, whereby as he must needs know perfectly what is best for us, together with all the various ways of bringing it to pass, so he will not withhold it from us in due season: Let us but thus reflect, and we shall see abundant reason to give our selves up Intirely and Cheerfully to his disposal. And then, even in the darkest and most uncomfortable Passages of our Lives, 'twill mightily keep up our Spirits to remember whose hand it is that does support and lead us; even *his*, under whose Guardianship and guidance we cannot but at present be safe, and at last shall not fail of being Happy.

Now when Jesus knew that *Lazarus* was Dead, *He said unto his Disciples, let us go into Judea again*, and they, knowing that he but lately withdrew from thence to avoid the Malicious fury of the *Jewish* Rulers, who were extreamly exasperated against him, and had resolved upon his Death, put him in mind of the great danger of returning thither so soon, and

and said unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? to which Jesus gave this excellent answer, *Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any Man walketh in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this World; but if a Man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in it.* Intimating that we must not be deterred by difficulty and danger, from Performing in its proper Season the Duty that God hath laid upon us; and when we walk in the way wherein he hath set us, according to the guidance of his word and blessed Spirit, which are as a *Lanthorn* to our feet and a *light* unto our *Paths*, we need not doubt of his Protection, so far as is consistent with the wise ends of his Providence, his Glory, and our own and the publick Good.

Psal. 119.
105.

'Tis deeds of darkness only that should make Men timorous, when they do what they are ashamed of, and cannot justify, and what deserves the Displeasure and Punishment both of God and Man; *But he that walketh uprightly walketh surely!* He treads firmly, and cares not who observes him, and moves on steadily in the Paths that he is sure will not deceive him or mislead him, and in which, whatever

Pro. 10.9.

happens, God will be his defender and support. Whereas *He that perverteth his ways*, and takes vile and unlawful Courses, and thinks to conceal and cover them by walking in the dark, under disguises and secret underhand contrivances, must needs be full of Frights and Fears, and often makes false steps, and stumble and fall, and have none to lift him up; and after all, shall be discovered and *known* to his utter Shame and Confusion. *For he that walketh in darkness*, as our Saviour says, *knoweth not whither he goeth*, nor to what Misery and Sorrow his walk will bring him at last.

John 12.
35.

Our Lord therefore, having the great work of Mans Salvation to finish, and the time then drawing nigh when he should compleat it by his Death: Tho' before that time was come he took care to Provoke his Enemies as little as was Possible, and often avoided their rage by a timely retreat, and kept out of their way till he could return with safety, according to his advice to his Disciples, *when they Persecute you in one City flee unto another*; yet now, with a noble resolution he goes to meet his sufferings, since they could be no longer shun'd if he would be the World's redeemer.

Upon

Upon this, *Thomas* said to the other Disciples, let us also go that we may die with him; "and since our Master is thus resolved upon this hazardous Journey to *Jerusalem*, let us not basely desert him, but as becomes faithful Servants, share in all his fortunes, think nothing too great to suffer for his sake, and when we can enjoy his Presence no longer upon Earth, be ready to lay down our Lives together with him, and attend him into his eternal Kingdom above: Where we shall meet our late deceased Friend, and all the blessed Company of Heaven, and be for ever with our Lord in Glory Everlasting.

If this was *St. Thomas's* meaning, as I believe it was, his Words are so far from weak and thoughtless, (as one way of understanding them would make them seem) that they are worthy the Mouth of an *Apostle*, and bespeak him of a truly Brave and Generous, that is, Christian Spirit; and they teach us how we should behave our selves in Confessing Jesus and his Truth, when we are call'd to it in times of Danger and Difficulty. Namely, with Courage and Fortitude, and such Fidelity and Love as casts out fear; in certain expectation of a never fading

fading Crown of Bliss and Glory in Heaven, as the reward of all our Religious sufferings here. *For this is a faithful saying, if we die with Christ we shall also live with him, if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together.*

2 Tim. 2.
11.

Rom. 8. 17.

Now by that time Jesus was come nigh to Bethany, He found that Lazarus had lain in the grave four days already; and many of the Jews were come from Jerusalem to perform the Friendly office of condoling with the two Sisters upon the loss of their Brother, and discoursing comfortably to them upon that mournful occasion.

But as soon as *Martha* had some intimation that Jesus was coming, she hastes to meet him as her best Comforter; and her first greeting was a Pathetick mixture of Joy, and Grief, and Love, together with a respectful expostulation with him about his seeming unkindness in not coming sooner to prevent her Brothers Death; withall, expressing her belief, that if he pleased, he could even still recover him to Life. *Lord, if thou hadst been here, says she, My Brother had not died, but I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.* For no doubt but she had heard of his raising from

from Death the Daughter of *Jairus*, and the Widows Son of *Naim*, and therefore might reasonably entertain some hopes that he would not be less kind and compassionate to them, whom he was pleased to Honour with a Peculiar Love and Friendship, than he had been to Strangers.

This tacit request of hers, so modestly and movingly express'd, our Lord presently apprehended aright, and gave her this direct answer, *Thy Brother shall rise again*. But she, having formerly often heard him discoursing of the general Resurrection at the end of the World, thought he might only mean that he should *then* rise again; and therefore, that she might be better satisfied, she said unto him, *I know that he shall rise again in the Resurrection at the last Day*, implying that what she beg'd of him was, that he would raise ~~up~~ him at present, and they might have a longer enjoyment of their dear Brother here below.

Upon this, to raise her expectations and increase her Faith, Jesus in a sublime mystical way, answered her saying, *I am the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die, believest thou this?* intimating

ting that since *Eternal Life* was thus in his disposal, this first short temporary Life must needs be so; and if she believed him able to raise up her Brother some hundreds or thousands of years hence, never to die any more, she need not question his Ability to make him live this mortal Life again; after a few days burial.

When she heard this, taking it for a Grant of her Request, she makes this general but full confession of her Faith, *Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the World;* and then immediately hastens to her Sister, and with Joy whispers to her, *the Master is come and calleth for thee. And Mary, as soon as she heard that, arose hastily and went out to Jesus, who was still where Martha met him,* at some distance from the Town, and not far from the place where *Lazarus* was Buried; and when those friends that were with her saw this suddain Motion of hers, they concluded that she went to the Grave, to indulge her grief by weeping there (as we are too apt to nourish and foment that Passion) and followed her to prevent any excesses by their good advice, or to take care of her in case of any fainting Fits, which this new tide of Sorrow that they

they thought was come upon her, might probably occasion.

But 'twas quite different Passions that carried *Mary* out, she went to meet her Divine Master, whose gracious cheering Presence was the most reviving Cordial, and gave her hopes as it had done her Sister, that though their Brother had been so long Dead, he might be recovered still.

And therefore, *When she was come where he was and saw him, she fell at his feet, and in the same moving manner greeted him as Martha did, saying, Lord if thou hadst been here my Brother had not Died. When Jesus therefore who had all our Innocent Passions, saw her weeping, and those that were with her, his kind and tender Spirit was so deeply touched with the affecting sight, that he could not but Sympathize with his sorrowful Friends, and bore a part in the mournful concert, and Sigh'd, and Groan'd, and Wept for Company; and that in so feeling a manner, that those who stood by thinking he lamented the loss of Lazarus, said, Behold how he loved him!*

But 'twas not his Friends Death that caused his Sighs and Tears, whom he intended presently to restore to Life, but

but pure *Compassion*; to which as the best Men are the most apt to be mov'd, so it is mightily conducive to the happiness of Mankind. For 'tis a most powerful motive to Charity, and the relief of those in distress; and inclines us so almost irresistibly, to commiserate one anothers misfortunes, that we can't be easie till we have some way expressed our concern for the miserable, and contributed something to their ease and succour.

'Tis an act of humanity which we naturally expect from each other, and think it very Barbarous for any to shew a hardened neglect and disregard of our troubles; and are so well pleased to find a fellow-feeling of them in any bodies Breast, that 'tis no little Comfort to us in Affliction to be affectionately condol'd with, though that be all.

Our most Compassionate Saviour therefore having not only upon this occasion, but throughout his Life, given us so great an example of Tenderness and Pity; let us shew our selves his true Disciples by Learning of him to have *Compassion one of another, and to be pitiful, and ready to lighten one anothers Burdens, and so fulfill the royal Law of Christ*; whereby we are Com-

1 Pet. 3.8.

Gal. 6.2.

Commanded to Love our Neighbour as
our selves, and to do to others as we would
they should do unto us. Nothing is more
Noble and God-like, and becoming a
Christian than this; and is so inseparable
from Pure sincere Religion, that St. John
with great assurance asks this question,
*How dwelleth the Love of God in him, that
shutteeth up his Bowels of Compassion from
his Brother?* 1 John 3. 17. Jam. 2. 8.
Matt. 7. 12.

But, as Malice and envy will make an
ill use of every thing, there were some
that took occasion from the great con-
cern our Lord shew'd for the Death of
Lazarus (as they supposed) to say, *Could
not this Man which opened the Eyes of the
Blind, have caus'd that even this Man
should not have died?* "It was but lately
"that he gave sight to one that was Born
"Blind, how then came his Power to
"be so much lessened on the suddain that
"he could not Cure this his Dear Friend
"when he was Sick, and so prevent that
"loss which now he laments so bit-
"terly?" Joh. 9. 1,
&c.

But this was designed as a reproachful
Jeer, by some that made it their business
to destroy the credit of that great Mira-
cle wrought upon the Blind Man, and
make it appear a trick; as if it was alto-
gether

gether incredible, that he should make one see that was blind from his Birth, who could not recover his Favourite *Lazarus* from an ordinary fit of Sickneſs.

Upon this ſtrange Perverſeneſs of theirs and rankled ſpite, *he again groaned in himſelf*, his Compaſſions were moved afreſh at their deplorable Condition, who thus ſhut faſt their eyes againſt all manner of Conviction; and having aſked where *Lazarus* was laid, when he came to the Grave, which was a Cave, with a ſtone laid upon it, he bid them *take away the ſtone*. Reſolving if poſſible to Conquer their Prejudices, or if not, to leave them without excuſe.

When *Martha* heard this, as full of hopes as ſhe was before, when her Brothers being raiſed again was only matter of Diſcourſe, and the pleaſing entertainment of her thoughts; now that it came to the Point, and *Jeſus* was going actually to raiſe him, her Heart and her Faith began to fail her: And ſo diſtruſtful was ſhe of the Event, (he having been ſo long Dead that according to the Courſe of Nature he began to Putrefie) that to divert our Lord from attempting what ſhe feared would be to little Purpoſe, and which ſhould it prove ſo, ſhe knew would

would be of the worst Consequence, *She said unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four Days.*

So weak and staggering is the Faith of even the best Persons, when any thing seems to them impossible; and so apt are we foolishly to conclude that this or that can't be, because we can't imagine how it should be; not considering *that with God all things are Possible*, and forgetting the many wondrous Works he hath already done.

But this is a weakness so very faulty, that it deserves a sharper rebuke than the mild Jesus gave to *Martha* here, *Said I not unto thee*, says he, *that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the Glory of God?*

“As if he had said, 'tis a very unworthy
“thought of me, to question my Ability
“of doing what I so plainly told you I
“would do and am now going to make
“good; and since God's Glory, and the
“end of my coming into the World is
“so much concern'd in it, if you believe
“me to be the Christ whom he hath sent
“to redeem Sinful Mankind, why should
“you in the least doubt of the Success?”

When he had said this, *they took away the stone from the place where the Dead was laid, and Jesus lift up his eyes and said, Father*

I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the People which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me: Thereby giving the Glory of the following stupendious Work to God, and teaching his Apostles and all others that *He* is the Fountain of Power and the spring of Being, and Life; that through him we Live and Move, and Act, and to him must address our selves for Aid and a Blessing in all our undertakings, more especially in those that are of weight and difficulty, and return all humble Thanks and Praise to him, when we succeed.

And when he had thus spoken, he said with a loud Voice, Lazarus, come forth; And he that was Dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave Clothes, and his Face bound about with a Napkin; and Jesus said unto them, Loose him and let him go.

How Amazing and Convincing was this! There could be no suspicion of any Juggle or Imposture here; and yet, tho' many that saw it believed on Jesus, some did not, but went full of Malice and Hatred, and acquainted the Pharisees with what had happened, who from that time took Counsel together to put him to Death, and

and never rested till they had effected it.

Now one great end of our Lords raising *Lazarus* to Life after so long Burial being (as was said) to Confirm his Disciples in the belief of his own Resurrection after he had suffered the Death of the Cross, which he had before told them of, *Matt. 16. 21.* And likewise all others in that of the general Resurrection at the Day of Judgment, which is a matter of the greatest consequence to us, and yet is thought by many to be utterly impossible, and not to be believed; Let us Learn from this Miracle and our Lords rebuke of *Martha's* diffidence, when he was going to Work it, because she supposed her Brother by that time began to Rot and Stink; let us Learn from hence never to doubt God's making his Word good in any Instance, whatever difficulties, or as we may think impossibilities may attend it, since nothing is too hard for him that is Almighty, and he that is Faithful and true will do as he hath said. And therefore since Christ hath so expressly told us, *That the Hour is coming, in the* Joh. 5.28;
which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and come forth, they that have done good unto the Resurrection of Life,

- and they that have done evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation; and hath given us a specimen of a thing so Wonderful*
- Mar. 5. 21. *not only by raising the Daughter of Jairus who was just Dead, and the Widows*
- Luk. 7. 11. *Son of Naim who was carried out to be Buried, but Lazarus here who began to Putrefie, and many others that had been much longer Dead, who came out of their Graves immediately after his own*
- Matt. 27. 53. *Resurrection, And went into the Holy City and appeared unto many, whereby he shewed that he could conquer Death in all its forms: Since this is so, why, as the Apostle said to King Agrippa, Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the Dead, even in the strictest Notion of a Resurrection?*
- Acts 26. 8.

And because, in this sceptical Infidel Age, 'tis highly needful for every Christian to be well grounded in the belief of this fundamental Article, *and ready to give an answer to every Man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him in this Particular; we shall briefly shew for a close of our observations upon this Miracle, "that a Resurrection, or new Formation of the same Body that died, "how long ago soever, and in what manner soever its Parts were separated,*

1 Pet. 3. 15.

"and

“ and Blended with the common mass of
“ matter, and a vital reunion of it to its
“ own Proper Soul that informed it in
“ its first Life, so that the very same
“ Person shall live again that died; we
shall shew, that even such a Resurrecti-
on from the Dead as *this*, which seems
the most of all impossible, is yet possi-
ble with God.

For, as for a Souls being reunited to
a Body it has quitted, and whose vital
Congruity has been utterly destroyed
by Death it may be some Thousands of
Years since, as that of *Adam* suppose,
and long ago turned to Dust; what
should make this *reunion* less Possible,
than that *first* Union between Soul and
Body when *Adam* was Created?

He that believes the Soul to be a distinct
substance from the Body, and of quite
another nature; that the one, is of it self
no better than dead senseless matter, and
was made of the dust of the Earth, and
that the other is all Spirit and Life:
How does he think these two so widely
different Natures, came at first to be thus
intimately joined together in a vital uni-
on as to make but one Person; and that
this spiritual Substance should communi-
cate such Life and Vigour to a clod of

clay, as to make it capable of serving the Soul in the exercise of many noble Functions?

Now, what *has* been, *may* be again; and the dust of a Body that was once animated and has been destroyed by Death, is no less capable of being fram'd anew, and again united to its Soul, than it was when the Soul did first of all inform it.

For, as for the Separation of the Parts of the Body one from another, when a dead Carcase either Rots or is Burnt or Devour'd by any other Creature, and the great alteration that is thereby made in them, and their Dispersion, and Incorporation with other matter, which would make it seem impossible that they should ever be recollected, and reduced to their first Form; there are many experiments in Chymistry that shew it possible for matter to run through very great changes, and yet by Humane skill be brought to what it was at first.

And as for gathering together the particular remains of every Dead Body however scattered over the Face of the Earth, and turned into the Substance, or mix'd with the Dust of other Bodies, and moulding them into the very same Body to which they at first belong'd; how hard a task

task soever it may be, yet it is not above the Knowledge and the Power of *God*, who is Infinite in both, and who all Men allow to be able to do whatever *can* be done.

For what can be beyond *his* ken, to whose all-seeing eye every thing in the Universe lies naked and open? And why should it be thought impossible for *him* who knows the inmost thoughts of the *Soul* of every Man, to know the abode of every scattered Particle of every ones *Body* too; and what mutations they have undergone, and how to recollect and sort them, and work them up into their former Figure, and reunite them to their Proper Soul?

And why should his Power be thought less sufficient to *restore* our ruined Tabernacles of Flesh out of the same materials, and put their severed Parts together, and make the whole as compleat and firm as ever; than it was to *raise* the Building at the first?

And though to us poor Creatures, whose knowledge and Power are confin'd within a very narrow compass, this looks so extreamly difficult as it does; yet to God 'tis as easie as the most ordinary and usual of his Works: Which in-

deed are all wonderful to those that duly consider them; Only their commonness makes them sit lighter upon our thoughts.

In short, as to *omniscience*, all things *knowable* are known, and that with equal Perspicuity and Clearness; so to *Omnipotence*, all things *possible*, are equally easie to be done; and nothing can be more impiously silly, than for a Creature to measure the Power or knowledge of his Creator by his own.

But for our further satisfaction in a thing of so great moment, let us reflect a little upon the wondrous things he hath already done; particularly, his extracting this magnificent and beautiful frame of the universe out of the confusions of a *chaos*.

The Scripture tells us, that at first *The Earth was without Form, and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep*; all things were in a confused manner jumbled together, the Principles of Light, and Fire, of Water, Earth, and Air, of the Bodies of Men and Beasts, of Birds, and Fishes, of Plants and Trees, of Metals and Minerals, and of the Celestial Bodies, the Sun, and Moon, and Stars: All these as widely different as they now appear to be, as beautiful and glorious, were at first but a shape-

a shapeless deformed mass of matter, dark and dismal, all huddled together without any distinction.

But now, when the Spirit of the Almighty moved upon this *Chaos*, and gave the Word; first Light the most beautiful of all the Creatures, was *Commanded to shine out of darkness*, which but just before was upon the face of all things. Then the Waters were separated from the Groffer Part of matter, and gathered together into one Place, and the dry Land appeared. Then were call'd forth into act the Seminal Powers of Grass, and Herbs, and Trees in great variety, which before lay Dead and Buried and scattered here and there through the confused heap; and after this, appeared the bright Luminaries of Heaven. Little sign was there of such radiant Bodies in the dark *Chaos*, and yet see how the all-seeing and all-powerful God, could discover and call together all the Particles of Fire that lay dispers'd and hid in that wide mass of different kinds of matter, and unite them into such vast and glorious Globes of Flame!

2 Cor. 4. 6.

After this, God commanded the Waters to exert their hidden Powers in the Production of innumerable sorts of Fish

Fish and Fowl, and the Earth to bring forth every living Creature that should move upon the face of it after their several kinds; and they obey'd. And then, as the master-piece of all, and his vice-gerent in this lower World, God made *Man in his own Image, out of the dust of the Earth*, and gave him a Soul of Heavenly extraction, able to Admire and Praise, and Love and Enjoy, his great and good Creator for ever.

Thus the Heavens and the Earth were finished, and all the Host of them; thus were they brought to this wonderful Perfection of beauty and order, out of a Dead, Unactive, Confused mass of matter; and that meerly by the Word and Command of the Almighty Fountain of Being and Perfection.

And now, let any Man seriously consider this, and then say whether 'tis incredible that this God, if he so pleased, should be able even as before described, to raise the Dead?

There cannot possibly be a more confused mixture of the several parts of matter than was in the first *Chaos*; and yet we see how easily God could cull, and sort, and dispose of every the least particle of it in its proper Place, and out of those

those materials so sorted raise a World of such admirable Beauty and Variety, and wise contrivance, as this we live in. And is not this God able to call together the scattered Particles of ruin'd Humane Bodies, where-ever dispers'd, or however changed and altered, and mix'd with other matter, and out of them to raise the same Buildings that were destroyed by Death, and to put the same Inhabitants into them that he did at first? For shame, no more infidel doubts in this matter, *O ye of little Faith!*

But can't we believe a *Resurrection* without explaining it in such a manner as this? suppose we may, yet this being the generally received notion of it in the Christian Church, as is evident not only from the most antient discourses about it, but from all the *Creeds*, and withal the most liable to exception; therefore I chose to prove it not incredible even in this most difficult Sence of all: Since if it is possible for God *thus* to raise the Dead, all other Interpretations of this Article which make it still more easie to be apprehended, will be admitted with less scruple; and no sensible Man that is not extremely prejudiced, and a downright unbeliever, will have any reason to question the truth of this

this great Doctrine upon any account whatever.

Since therefore the Holy Scriptures have plainly told us that all that die shall at last be raised again to a new and endless Life and there is nothing in the thing but what is very possible with God, even in the strictest notion of it ; and since our Lord, to confirm our Faith in an Article of such mighty consequence, hath already rais'd several from the Dead, and *Lazarus* here after *four*, and himself after *three days Burial*: Let us not be *Faithless but Believing*.

2 Cor. 5.
10.

And since this Resurrection is in order to *Judgment*, that every Man may appear before the tribunal of Christ, and be rewarded according to what he hath done in his first Body, whether it be good or bad, and be either doom'd to eternal Misery with the Devils of Hell if Wicked, or received into the Everlasting Joys of Heaven if sincerely Righteous, so that this present Life is but a state of Tryal and Probation for that other which is to come ; it above all things concerns us with St. Paul, *Herein to exercise ourselves, to have always a Conscience void of offence both towards God and Man.*

Act. 24. 16.

And

And then, when that great Day shall come, and the Arch-Angels trumpet shall awaken us out of our long sleep, and *this Mortal Body shall have put on Immortality*; we shall be happily assured that we have not served God for nought: and cry out with Joy unspeakable and triumphantly Glorious, *O Death where is thy Sting, O Grave where is thy Victory! The Sting of Death is Sin, and the strength of Sin is the Law, but thanks be to God who hath given us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

1 Cor. 15.
55.

To whom with his Divine Father and most Holy Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, and Love, and Obedience, both now, and for evermore. *Amen.*

CONCLUSION.

HAVING thus taken a *Practical view* of those wonderful Works of our Great Master, in which his Divine Power and Goodness shone so Gloriously, even when in his lowest *Abasement* for our sakes; and having found them to be, not only

only a demonstration of his being the Promised Saviour of the World, but also full of instruction in the most concerning truths relating to good Life: We may for a Conclusion of the whole observe, in order to our more profitable reading the Holy Scriptures, what improvement may be made of every Part of them, the *Historical*, as well as *Doctrinal* and *Devotional*, to the best of Purposes, by Perusing them *Orderly*, and *Deliberately*, with due thought and serious reflection, and making them our *Study*, as we do other Books.

And indeed, there is in the Holy Scriptures, such a vast variety of entertainment for a well disposed Reader, that the *Bible*, is not only the most *excellent* and *useful*, but really the most *diverting* Book in the World. And would we but bestow as much time and application of mind upon it, as we do upon other considerable Authors; we should soon discover such excellencies in it, as would even *chain* us to it (but with a most delightful Captivity) and make us relish nothing like it, and what is written upon it, as a help to our better understanding it.

What a noble account for instance does it give of the first formation of the World; the Original of Humane race; the

“ the unhappy *fall* of our common An-
 “ cestors from the favour of their Crea-
 “ tor ; and the hopes that were gracious-
 “ ly given them of a *Recovery* !

“ How affecting is the History of the
 “ Holy and Venerable *Patriarchs* ; their
 “ intercourse with God and Heavenly
 “ Spirits ; their great Simplicity, Piety
 “ and Generosity ; the wonderful Provi-
 “ dences of God towards them and their
 “ Posterity, and the admirable steps and
 “ advances that were made from Age to
 “ Age to the happy times of the *Messias* !

“ And how surprizing is the relation
 “ we have of *his Conception*, and *Birth*,
 “ and *Life*, and *Death*, who was the de-
 “ sire of all *Nations* !

“ How mean was his outward appea-
 “ rance ! and yet how did his *Divinity*
 “ break through all the clouds and veils
 “ that he was pleased to put upon it to
 “ conceal it ! he seemed to be no other
 “ than a *Poor, Despised, Afflicted Man* ;
 “ and yet, the wondrous things he did,
 “ and Heavenly Doctrines he taught be-
 “ spoke him to be what he was, *God ma-
 “ nifest in the Flesh to destroy the Works of
 “ the Devil*.

“ How did he vanquish that great Ene-
 “ my both to *him* and *us*, by those very
 “ sufferings,

“*sufferings*, which by his wicked instruments he brought upon him ! How did he triumph over the Infernal Powers upon that Cross to which they nailed him, and acquired infinite Glory to himself, and purchased Heaven for lost Mankind, by undergoing a most Infamous and Cruel Death !

“ And how Miraculously did he return to Life again, and that exactly at the time when he foretold he would do so ! “ Conversing with his Disciples for many Days together, and then Triumphant-ly ascending into the highest Heavens “ in the sight of many spectators ; from whence in an amazing manner he “ showred down such supernatural Gifts “ upon those that were to spread the Gospel in his absence, as made them become the Wonder of the World !

Now, what a full entertainment is here for our *best thoughts* ? How will such great things as these, engage our *Wonder*, our *Joy*, our utmost *Praise*, and *Love* ; and force from us the Psalmists rapturous exclamation, *Lord what is Man, that thou art thus mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou shouldest thus visit him !*

All the Books in the World, cannot afford any thing comparable to what this

Divine

Divine Book treats of; and that in the most moving manner too, without the least appearance of *Artifice* or *Affectation*, and with a natural *Majestick* gracefulness in all its various turns.

But, as I said, 'tis not every Reader that will have this taste for the Scriptures; and 'tis not running through a single chapter now and then, without order and Connexion, and with all the haste that may be, and then laying the Book aside, and thinking no more of the matter, that will do us any Considerable good; for no Book whatever of any value, that is huddled over at this heedless rate, would be read to any Purpose, much less the *Book of God*.

No, we must dwell upon it, and with Holy *David*, make it our *Meditation* day and night; comparing carefully one passage with another, and reading not scatteringly here and there a little, but perusing what is of the same nature and tendency together; and then, fixing it in our minds by serious *Meditation*, and above all, endeavouring to improve it (as we have done our Lord's *Miracles* here, and have formerly his *Parables*) to what is the great end, as to us, of its being written, the increase of a true Sense of
Cc Religion

Religion in us, and sincere Holiness of Life, that we may grow wise by it to Salvation.

For, whoever reads the Scriptures out of Curiosity only, or vain glory, or for any Purpose or Design, that does not tend to this in the Conclusion, does highly Prophane and abuse them, and will sadly repent it at last.

But he that with due reverence, Humility, and Pious Intention, takes the Course I mentioned just now in his Sacred studies, will in a little time have a true relish for the Holy writings; and the seeming driness and obscurity of them at first, will soon wear off, and they will grow more Pleasant and Beneficial every day than other.

Especially, (and which should never be omitted) if we add *Prayer* to our Meditations: and having humbly begged God's blessing and direction before we *begin*, (which we cannot do better than in the words of the *Collect* for the second Sunday in *Advent*) and darted up Devout ejaculations to him whilst we were reading, that he would preserve us from all dangerous errors, and give us a right understanding in his Heavenly truth; we then close all with some few Petitions *sui-
ted* to the *Subject* we have been upon, that
it

it may sink deep enough into our Souls to have firm rooting there, and bring forth Plenty of agreeable Fruit, in a conversation becoming the Gospel.

I have therefore, for the Pious Readers reaping greater benefit by the foregoing observations, drawn up a *Prayer* to his hand relating to them; and shall now leave him to offer it up, for *himself*, and *me*, and *all that name the name of Christ*, with *Holy hands*, a *Pure mind*, and warm *Affections*: *And the good Lord hear and Answer him, and grant him the desires of his Heart!*

The Prayer.

I.

Most Holy, and most Compassionate Saviour! Who, when upon Earth, didst manifest thy Almighty Power in Miracles of mercy, that thou mightest draw mankind to thee by the Cords of Love; Increase

our Faith, inflame our affections, perfect our Repentance, and confirm our Hope!

O Jesus! we confess our Vileness, and irrecoverable ruine, without thy succour; but, Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make us clean, and speak but the word only and we shall be whole! Lord we believe, help thou our unbelief! and by the Power of thy Grace cast out from us utterly the spirit of Infidelity, and all Uncleanness, and captivate every Power and Faculty to thy Obedience, and the interest of thy Kingdom; that we may be thine intirely and for ever, who hast done such wondrous things for our Redemption?

II.

O Thou, who art the light of the World, open our benighted Eyes that we may see the things that belong to our Peace ; and follow, and rejoyce in, that Heavenly light which thou hast graciously given to direct us to our happiness ! And may we be no longer Deaf, to the glad tidings and saving Counsels of thy Gospel ; but affectionately hear and embrace them, and become a tractable and willing People : that so the Pious Labours of thy Ministers may be mightily successful, and effectually perswade us to live worthy of our Holy Profession, and to be Zealous of good works !

III.

III.

DO thou but touch our benumb'd
stupid Souls, and we shall
soon recover our spiritual strength,
and run the way of thy Com-
mandments with cheerfulness and
vigour; and though we are even
Dead in Trespasses and Sins, life-
less and insensible to the one thing
needful, and ready to sink down into
Eternal Death; yet thou canst raise
up whom thou wilt. O therefore,
look with pity upon thy poor unhap-
py Servants, whom thou hast re-
deemed with thy precious Blood;
and by the enlivening influences of
thy all-quickning Spirit, breath in-
to us anew the breath of Heavenly
Life! Call to us with a mighty pre-
valency to arise and walk; and
help us with thy merciful hand too,
who

who cannot move one step without thee, and then Confirm in us what thou hast begun, that so this mortal Death may have no more Dominion over us. But having, through thy Grace and Assistance, persevered in the way of Righteousness, and with Faith, and Patience, and Hope, resisted the Temptations, and out-rid the Storms, of this present Treacherous and Tempestuous World; we may at length, through thy merits and mercy, arrive at the blessed Haven where we would be; and being cloathed upon with our House that is from Heaven may see the felicity of thy chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of thy People, and give thanks with thine Inheritance, in the blissful regions of perpetual tranquility and rest!

IV.

TO this blessed end of our Hopes,
and Labours and Afflictions,
do thou bring us, Dearest Redeemer,
in thy own good time, and by what
ways and methods thou knowest to be
best! For thou art our Confidence,
our Guardian and Guide; in thee
alone do we trust, and resign our
selves intirely up to thy disposal,
who art able to do for us exceed-
ing abundantly, above what we
can ask or think.

To thee therefore, with thy eternal
Father, and most Holy Spirit, be
all Honour and Glory, Love, Submis-
sion and Obedience, for ever and
ever. Amen.



FINIS.

